

MARJORIE LIU

SANA TAKEDA

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image
27

monsteress



2019 HUGO AWARD WINNER

THE STORY SO FAR...

The world is at war. Maika Halfwolf's biological father and his power-hungry Blood Court set off a bomb in the Cumaeen holy city of Aurum, inflaming long-simmering tensions between humans and Arcanics. Now, Colonel Anuwat and her human army are marching on the walled Arcanic city of Ravenna, where Maika agreed to travel with her companions, Kippa and Corvin. Kippa hoped to offer aid to fox Arcanic refugees, while Corvin hoped to convince his healer sister, Bettani, to flee Ravenna. But it was Maika who took control of the panicked, leaderless city, using the power of Zinn, the Monstrum that lives inside her, to inspire fear and obedience in the hearts of Ravenna's residents and the hopeful refugees pounding on its walls. Now installed as Ravenna's unofficial but uncontested military leader, Maika offered a deal: the refugees could enter the city and keep their children safe, but only if every Arcanic over the age of twelve agreed to take up arms in the coming battle.

THE PLAYERS...



MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaeen witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh.



ZINN A mysterious, primordial Monstrum of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye...



KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.



SIR CORVIN D'ORO An Arcanic Lord, First Watchman of the Court and Commander of the Inner Wall. He is loyal to the Dusk Court but has willingly defied their orders because of his desire to protect Maika and his belief that she can and will serve a greater purpose.



TUYA Maika's closest friend in the world, who has been with her since before the Battle of Constantine. Unbeknownst to Maika, she is also the Baroness of the Last Dusk, a high-level member of the Arcanic Dusk Court tasked with containing — or even destroying — Maika's power.



WARLORD The Dawn Court's "Sword of the East," twin sister of Moriko Halfwolf, and Maika's aunt. Ruthless in her ambition, the Warlord's greatest desire is to unravel the mystery behind the destruction of Constantine. She believes the secrets of Constantine will protect the Arcanics in their impending war against the humans — but she does not realize that the answers she seeks lie within her young niece.



SHAMAN-EMPRESS The first and most powerful Arcanic who ever lived, a science-master of the highest order and Zinn's beloved. Maika is her direct descendant, and bears her Mark of the Eye.

THE BATTLE OF
CONSTANTINE.
SIX YEARS AGO.

DO YOU
HEAR THAT
SCREAMING?

SOMETHING'S
HAPPENING IN
THE TRENCH.

IS THAT A
WITCH DOWN
THERE?

WAIT,
DON'T GO ANY
CLOSER --

COME ON,
DEMON.

MARIUM
NEEDS YOUR
BONES.

THE
WITCHES ARE
HARVESTING!

TELL THE
OTHERS!

DON'T
TAKE MY
SOUL!

THESE
ORDERS
ARE
SHIT.

YOU CUMAEA
HAVE TO WAIT --
OR GIVE US
ACTUAL HELP.

OUR SUPPLY CHAIN IS RUBBISH, WE'RE
RUNNING OUT OF AMMUNITION AND
WEAPONS. WHO'S GOING TO SCAVENGE
FOR US? I CAN'T AFFORD TO SEND
SOLDIERS UP --

THESE
ORDERS
COME FROM
LADY SOPHIA
FEKETE
HERSELF.

SHE NEEDS
THESE...DEMON
BODIES...AS MUCH
AS YOU NEED
WEAPONS,
COMMANDER.

URK!

YOU HEAR THAT?! THEY'RE **HARVESTING!** WE CAN'T GO BACK TO THE TRENCH! I'D RATHER DIE UP HERE THAN BE HACKED APART!

BUT GO WHERE? THEY'LL JUST USE THE COLLARS TO EXPLODE US!

≡GASP≡

AT LEAST GETTING OUR HEADS BLOWN OFF BY THE COLLARS WOULD BE A FAST DEATH.

MAYBE WE'LL ESCAPE.

MAYBE WE'LL LIVE. *I WANT TO LIVE, TUYA.*

BETTER IF YOU DON'T.

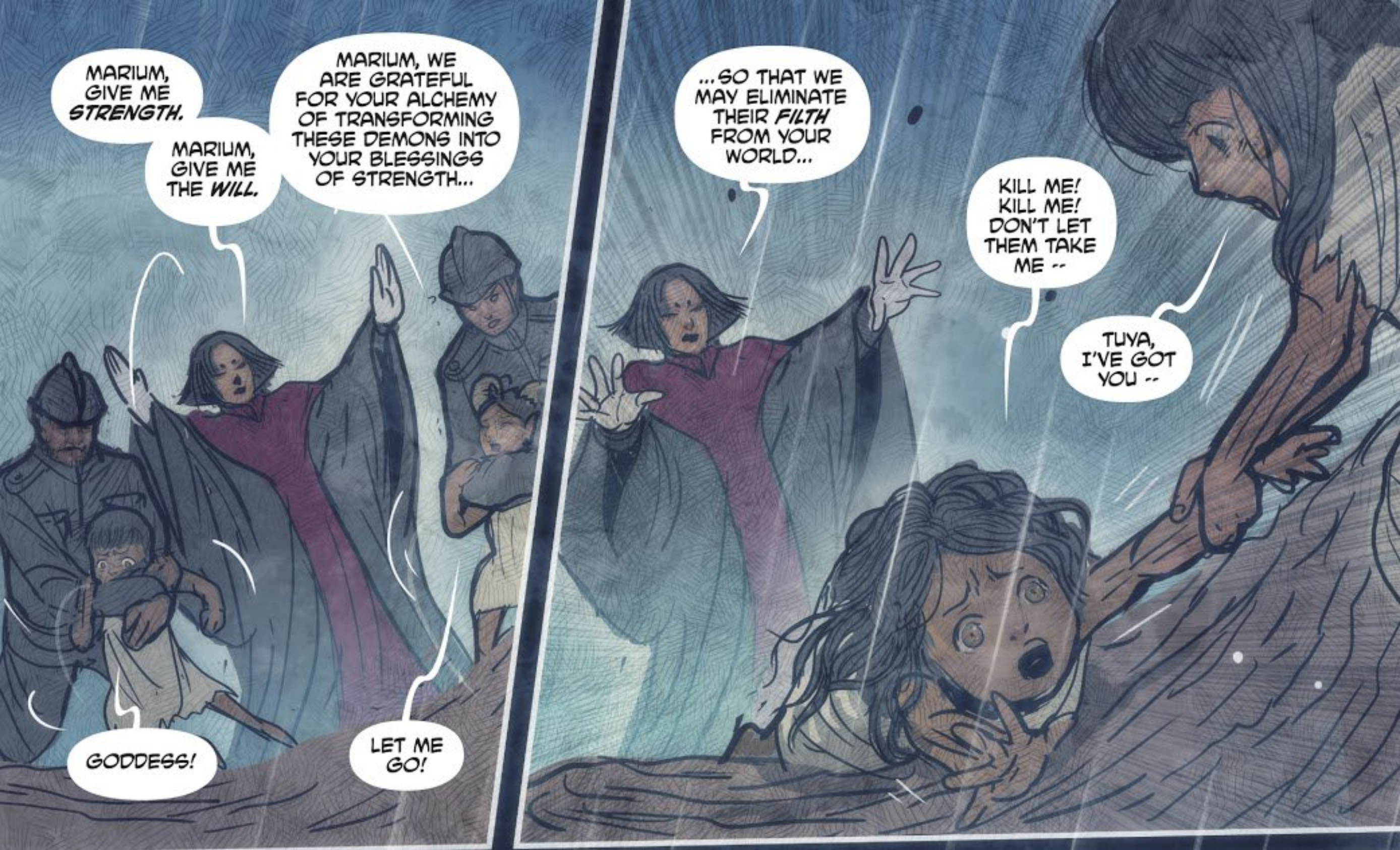
LET'S RUN!

≡GASP≡
MY FEET... WHY WON'T THEY MOVE?!

NO, NO, NO! I'M STUCK!

NO... RUNNING... FOR... YOU...

AAAAAEE!!
EEEEKK!



PRESENT.

"THIS IS THE THIRD
OFFICER REPORTED
MURDERED, COLONEL.

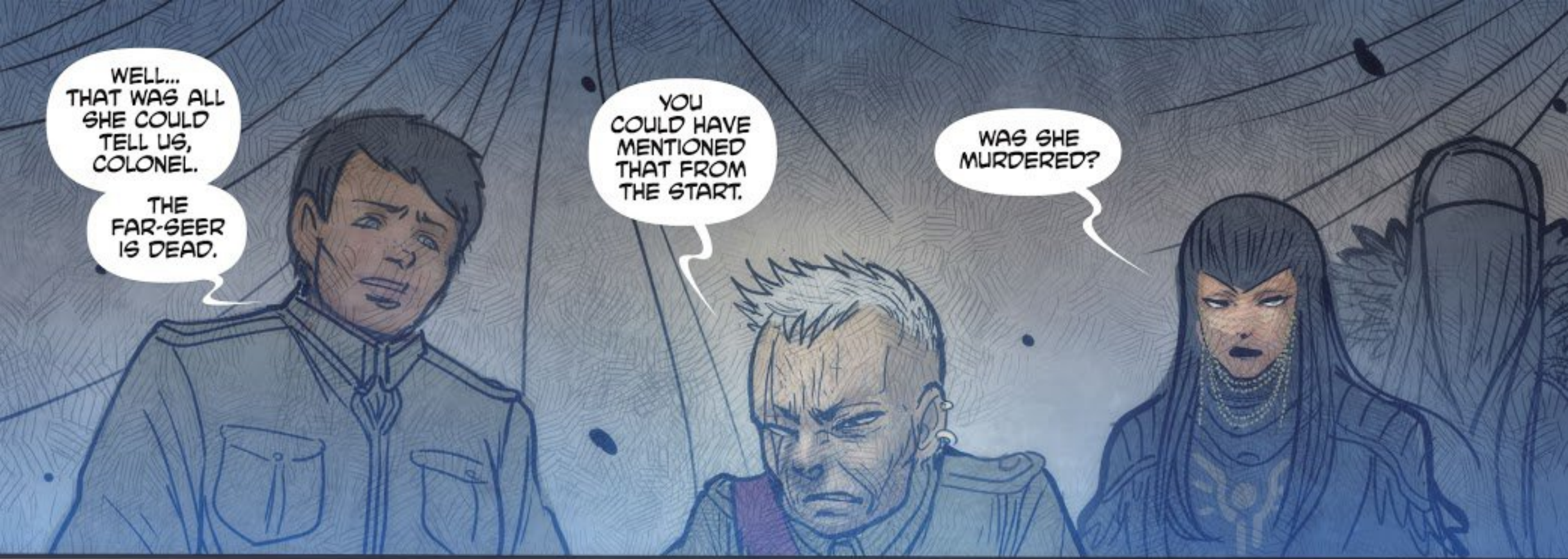
"THE WOUNDS
INDICATE A CAT
ATTACK.

"CATS ALSO POISONED THE
GRAIN. OVER A HUNDRED
HORSES ARE BEING PUT DOWN,
AND WE'RE WAITING TO SEE IF
ANY OTHERS SICKEN.

"AND...IT LOOKS AS
THOUGH SOME WASTE
BUCKETS FROM THE
LATRINE WERE
DUMPED INTO THE
WATER TANKS."

THE CUMAEAN
FAR-SEER REPORTED
THAT A SMALL SQUAD
IS RESPONSIBLE,
SOMEWHERE CLOSE
TO THE EAST.

AND?
WHAT
ELSE?



WELL...
THAT WAS ALL
SHE COULD
TELL US,
COLONEL.

THE
FAR-GEER
IS DEAD.

YOU
COULD HAVE
MENTIONED
THAT FROM
THE START.

WAS SHE
MURDERED?



IT APPEARS
SHE HAD...A
STROKE?

YOU SOUND
UNCERTAIN.

IT WAS
HIDEOUS. HER
EYES
EXPLODED.

PARTS OF HER
BRAIN CAME OUT,
TOO. THEY'RE
STILL...CLEANING
UP BITS.



JUST BEFORE SHE
DROPPED DEAD, SHE
WAS BEGINNING TO
REPORT ON A VISION
OF SOME GIRL WHO
IS HALF WOLF.

WE DON'T
KNOW WHAT
IT MEANS.

...HMMM...
HALF WOLF...
PERHAPS
THE HALFWOLF,
WHO GULL AND
THE MOTHER
SUPERIOR
HAVE BEEN
HUNTING?



GENERAL!



WE HAVE
ANOTHER...
SITUATION.

WHAT...
WHAT HAVE THE
DEMONS DONE
TO THEM?

MARIUM,
SAVE US!

≠HURK≠

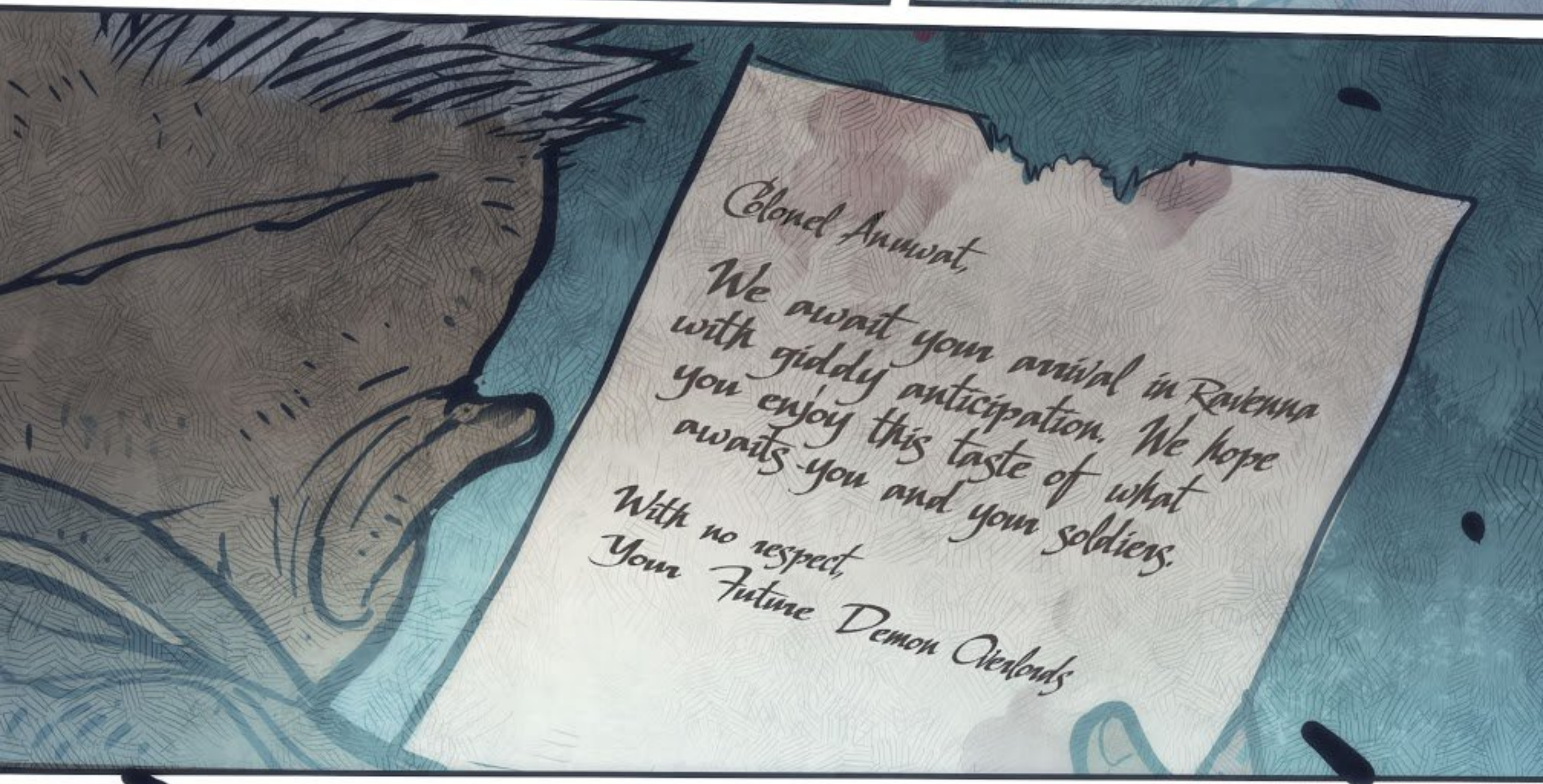


URRGH

RNNFF

Colonel Amurat

AMATEURS.



"YOUR STRATEGY IS HAVING SOME EFFECT, HALFWOLF. THE FEDERATION SOLDIERS ARE TERRIFIED."

"ALL THE ADVANCED FEDERATION UNITS ABANDONED THEIR POSTS IN THE FOREST."

"IT DIDN'T TAKE US LONG TO CATCH UP TO THEM."

"WE HUNG THE HUMANS FROM THEIR GUTS ALONG THE ROAD TO RAVENNA, AND SPIKED THEIR HEADS."

WHAT IS YOUR ARCANIC GIFT?

FORMER SOLDIERS AND THOSE WITH BATTLE-GIFTS, TO THE RIGHT!

EVERYONE ELSE, REPORT ON THE LEFT!

DON'T REALLY HAVE ONE, EXCEPT FOR KNOWING THE EARTH AND HOW TO GROW.

GOOD SENSE OF SMELL? NEVER SEEN BATTLE, NEITHER. WAS KEPT BACK TO WORK THE FIELDS.

YOU HAVE BATTLE EXPERIENCE?

WAS IN A BATTALION UNTIL MY LEG GOT BLOWN OFF. I CAN HANDLE MOST WEAPONS, ARCANIC AND FEDERATION, AS LONG AS I DON'T HAVE TO DO MUCH RUNNING.

GOT FAR SIGHT. ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A SNIPER BUT I WAS TOO OLD FOR THE LAST WAR.

TOUGH SKIN. KNIVES WON'T CUT ME EASY.

THE WEAPONS WE COLLECTED FROM THE HUMANS HAVE NEW WITCH UPGRADES. THE CHARGES SEEM TO BE FUELED BY LILIUM SHARDS.

ONLY THE CATS WERE ABLE TO TOUCH THEM WITHOUT FEELING ILL.

I DON'T GIVE A FUCK IF THE LILIUM MAKES EVERYONE BLEED OUT THE ASS, CAPTAIN MIN. WE CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO USE THESE GUNS.



ALSO...
WELL
DONE.

HOW CONVENIENT
THAT A TRAINED
MILITARY UNIT JUST
HAPPENED TO BE AT
RAVENNA...PASSING
THROUGH.

WE'RE OLD
FRIENDS. FOOT
SOLDIERS DURING THE
WAR, TRYING TO FIND A
PLACE TO RESETTLE.
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS,
YOU KNOW, BUT
HARDLY A...
UNIT.



IF YOU SAY
SO. NO ONE ELSE
SEEMED TO HAVE
THE STOMACH
FOR MY...
DEMANDS.

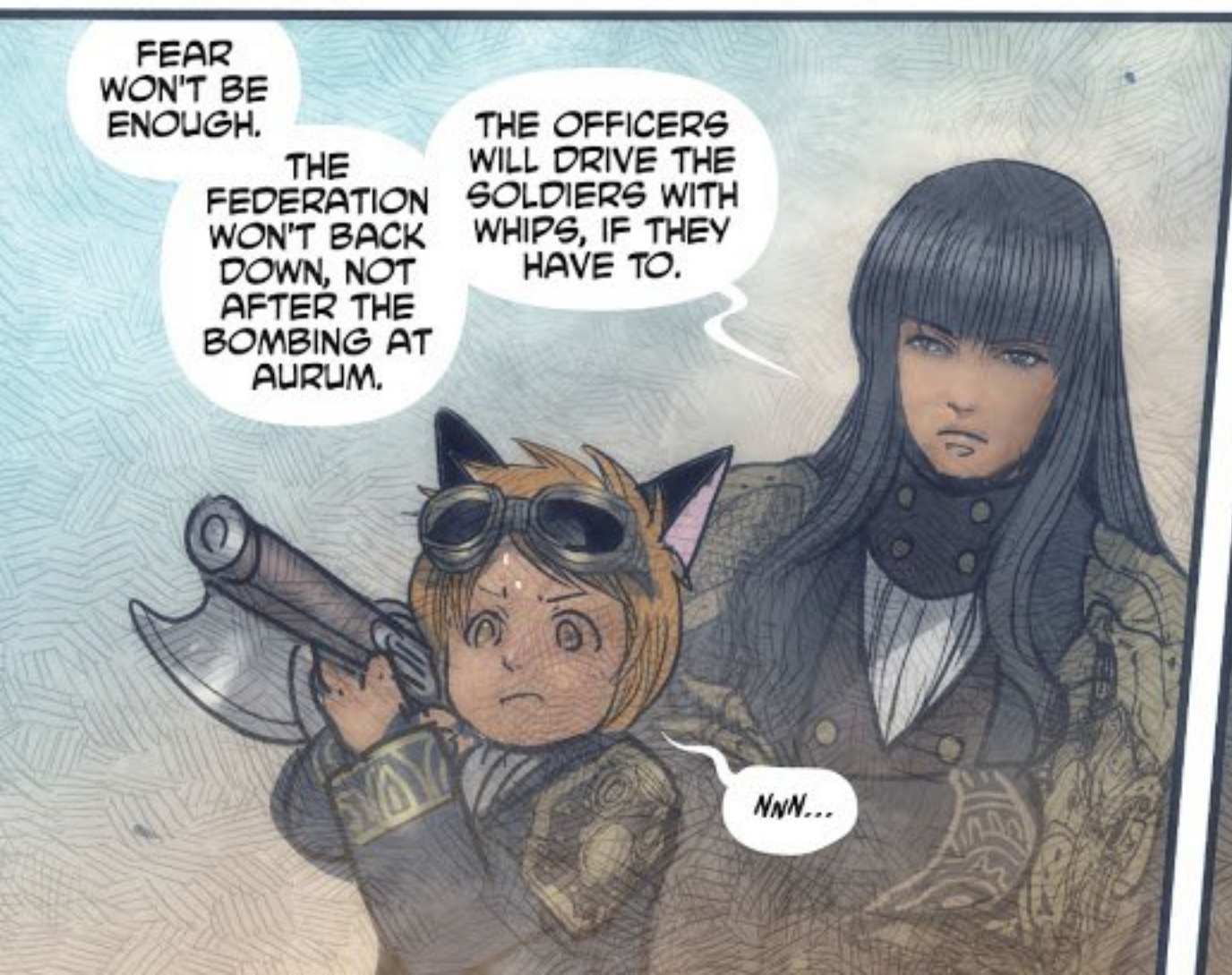
YOU'RE A SAVAGE,
HALFWOLF. BUT A
SAVAGE IS A DAMN
USEFUL THING IN A
WAR.



TO
QUOTE THE
POETS...

...YOU DON'T
HAVE TO KILL MANY
PEOPLE TO TURN A
WAR...YOU JUST HAVE
TO KILL THEM
HORRIBLY.

FEAR
DOES THE
REST.



FEAR
WON'T BE
ENOUGH.

THE
FEDERATION
WON'T BACK
DOWN, NOT
AFTER THE
BOMBING AT
AURUM.

THE OFFICERS
WILL DRIVE THE
SOLDIERS WITH
WHIPS, IF THEY
HAVE TO.

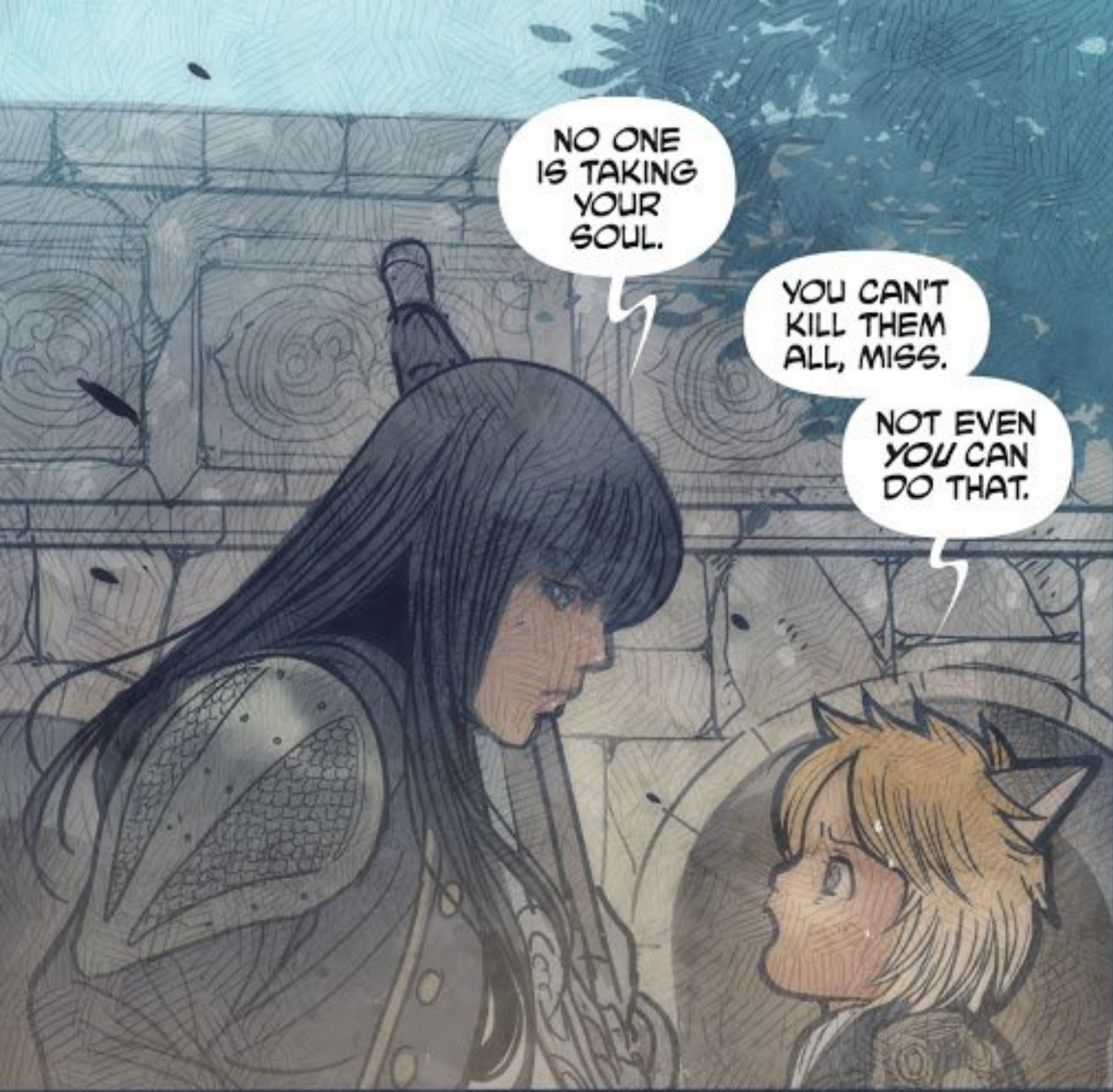
NNN...



THIS ISN'T FOR YOU,
LITTLE FOX. IT'S
ALREADY MAKING
YOU SICK.

BUT I'LL
NEED TO
FIGHT.

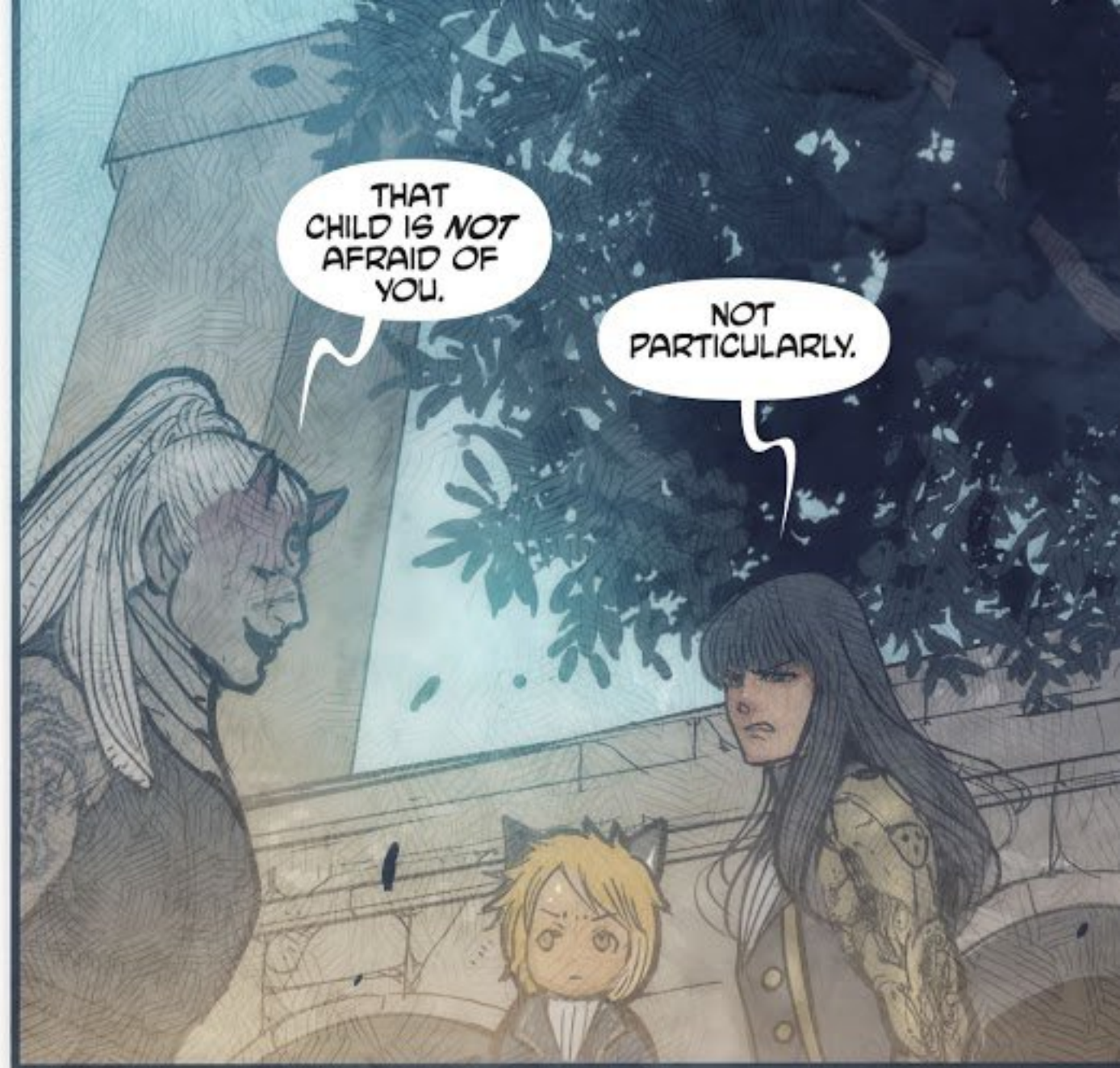
THE WITCHES
ARE COMING,
AND I CAN'T LET
THEM TAKE MY
SOUL.



NO ONE
IS TAKING
YOUR
SOUL.

YOU CAN'T
KILL THEM
ALL, MISS.

NOT EVEN
YOU CAN
DO THAT.



THAT
CHILD IS *NOT*
AFRAID OF
YOU.

NOT
PARTICULARLY.

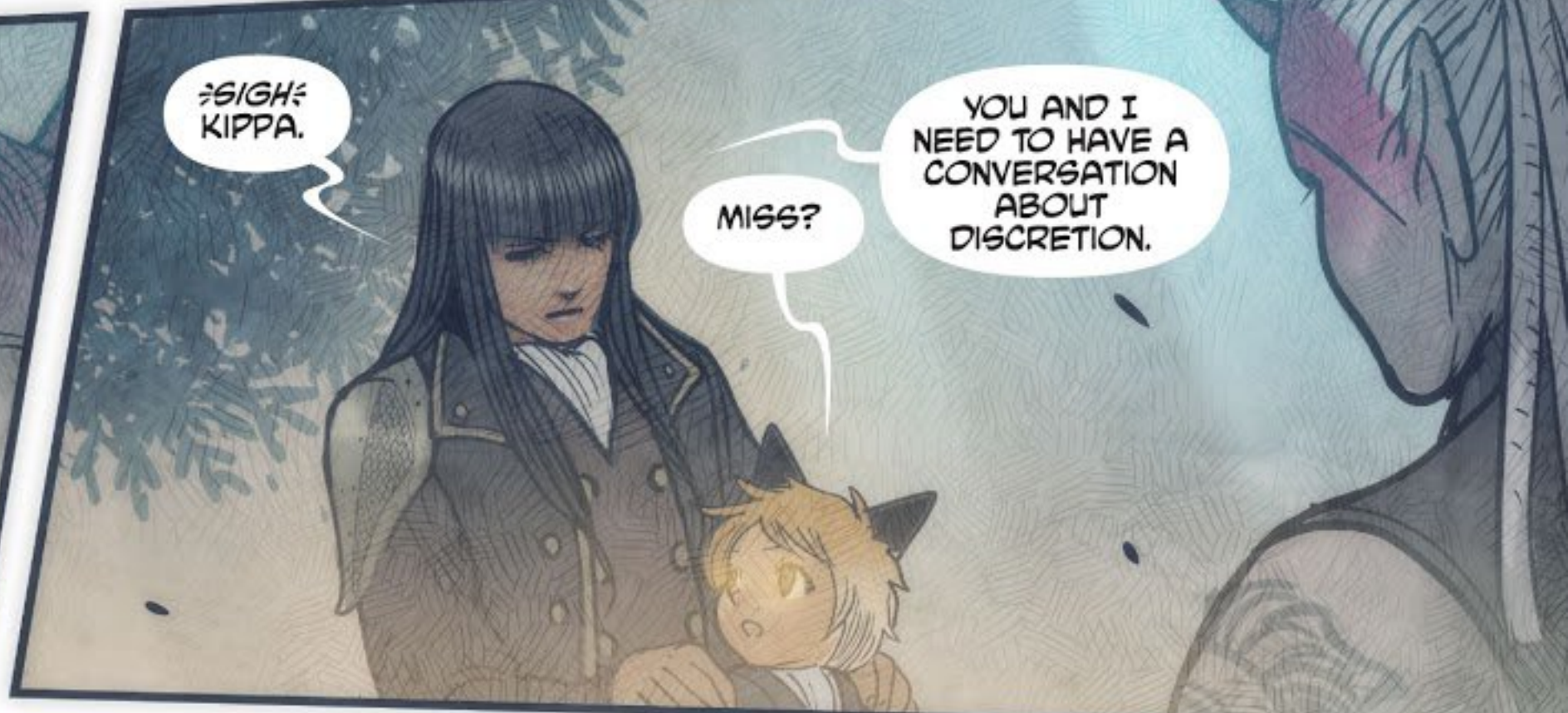


BUT
YOU'RE
AFRAID OF
MISS MAIKA,
AREN'T
YOU?

IN FACT...
YOU'RE *VERY*
AFRAID.



YOU'RE HIDING
SOMETHING,
AND YOU THINK
SHE'LL KILL
YOU IF --



~SIGH~
KIPPA.

MISS?

YOU AND I
NEED TO HAVE A
CONVERSATION
ABOUT
DISCRETION.



I ALREADY
KNOW WHY
CAPTAIN MIN
IS HERE.

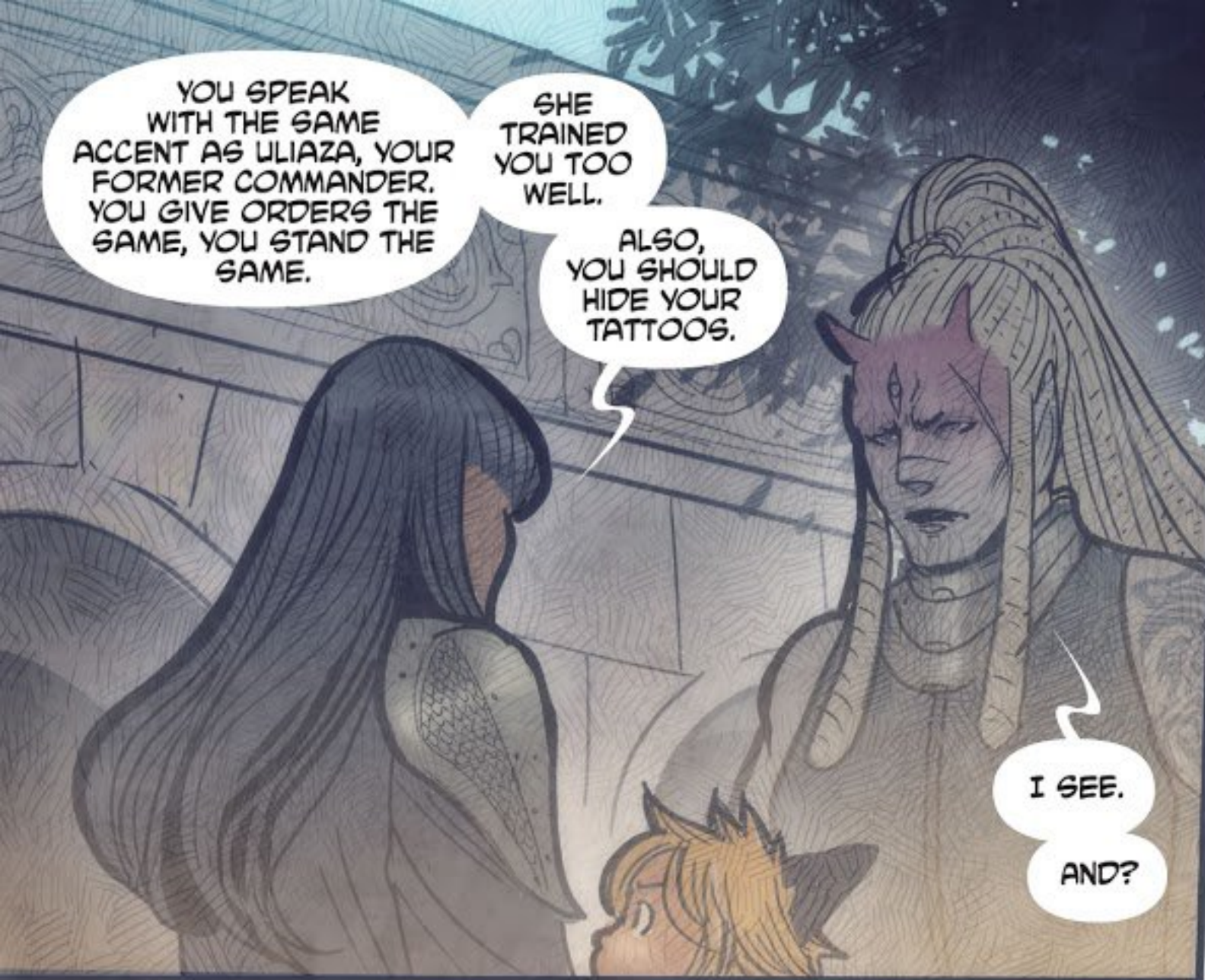
BUT I WAS
BEING POLITE...
BECAUSE
SHE'S USEFUL.

GREY
RIDERS
USUALLY
ARE.



...
WHAT
GAVE US
AWAY?

THE EXISTENCE
OF THE GREY
RIDERS ISN'T
KNOWN OUTSIDE
THE COURTS.



YOU SPEAK WITH THE SAME ACCENT AS ULIAZA, YOUR FORMER COMMANDER. YOU GIVE ORDERS THE SAME, YOU STAND THE SAME.

SHE TRAINED YOU TOO WELL.

ALSO, YOU SHOULD HIDE YOUR TATTOOS.

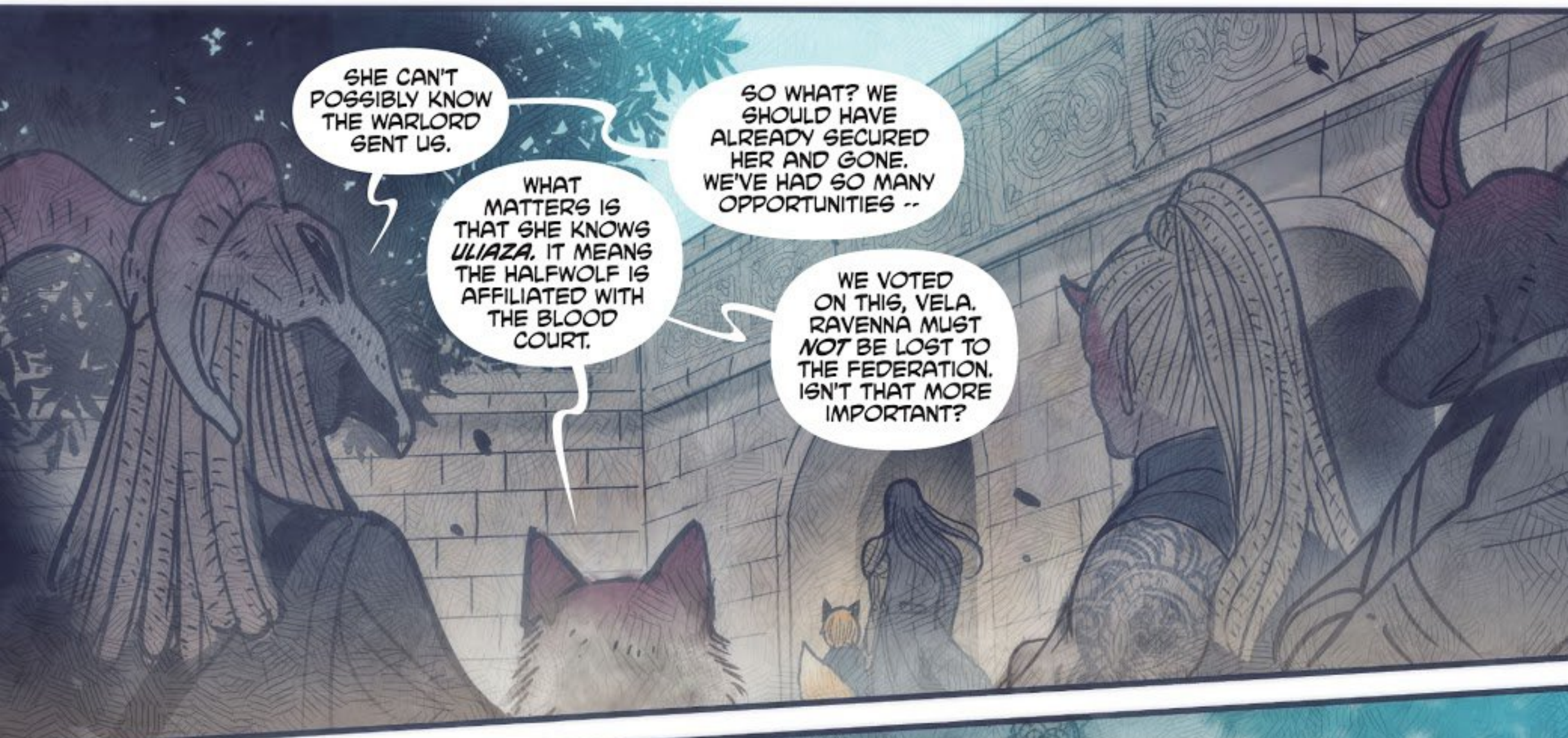
I SEE.

AND?



AND, NOTHING. AS LONG AS YOU FIGHT FOR RAVENNA.

BUT IF YOU DECIDE TO BE STUPID...



SHE CAN'T POSSIBLY KNOW THE WARLORD SENT US.

WHAT MATTERS IS THAT SHE KNOWS *ULIAZA*. IT MEANS THE HALFWOLF IS AFFILIATED WITH THE BLOOD COURT.

SO WHAT? WE SHOULD HAVE ALREADY SECURED HER AND GONE. WE'VE HAD SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES --

WE VOTED ON THIS, VELA. RAVENNA MUST NOT BE LOST TO THE FEDERATION. ISN'T THAT MORE IMPORTANT?



NOT IF WE'RE GOING TO ABANDON OUR OATHS -- *JUST LIKE COMMANDER ULIAZA ABANDONED US.*

FOR THE LOVE OF UBASTI, JUST GIVE IT UP. WE SHOULD HAVE *LEFT* WITH ULIAZA, INSTEAD OF LETTING THE WARLORD WASTE OUR GIFTS ON *KIDNAPPINGS.*

QUIET, BOTH OF YOU.

AT THE MOMENT, I THINK WE HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVING A FEDERATION SIEGE THAN CAPTURING THE HALFWOLF.



BUT, TO QUOTE THE POETS...

...WAR IS THE MUSE OF OPPORTUNITY.

"SHE'S SUPPOSED TO HURT YOU, MISS. I COULD SEE IT INSIDE HER. I HAD TO SAY SOMETHING."



THEY WOULD HAVE TRIED TO KILL YOU BEFORE YOU FINISHED YOUR SENTENCE.

I KNOW.

BUT IF YOU WAIT TO TELL THE TRUTH, THEN YOU MIGHT GET TOO SCARED TO SAY IT.

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED WITH MASTER REN.



WAIT.... WHY AREN'T THEY BEING ALLOWED IN?

IT'S SOME PACIFIST, OLD GOD SECT THAT BELIEVES IN NON-VIOLENCE. THEY WON'T FIGHT.

AND MY RULES WERE *CLEAR*.

NO PROTECTION FOR THOSE WHO WON'T PICK UP ARMS.

MISS, YOU HAVE TO LET THEM INSIDE.

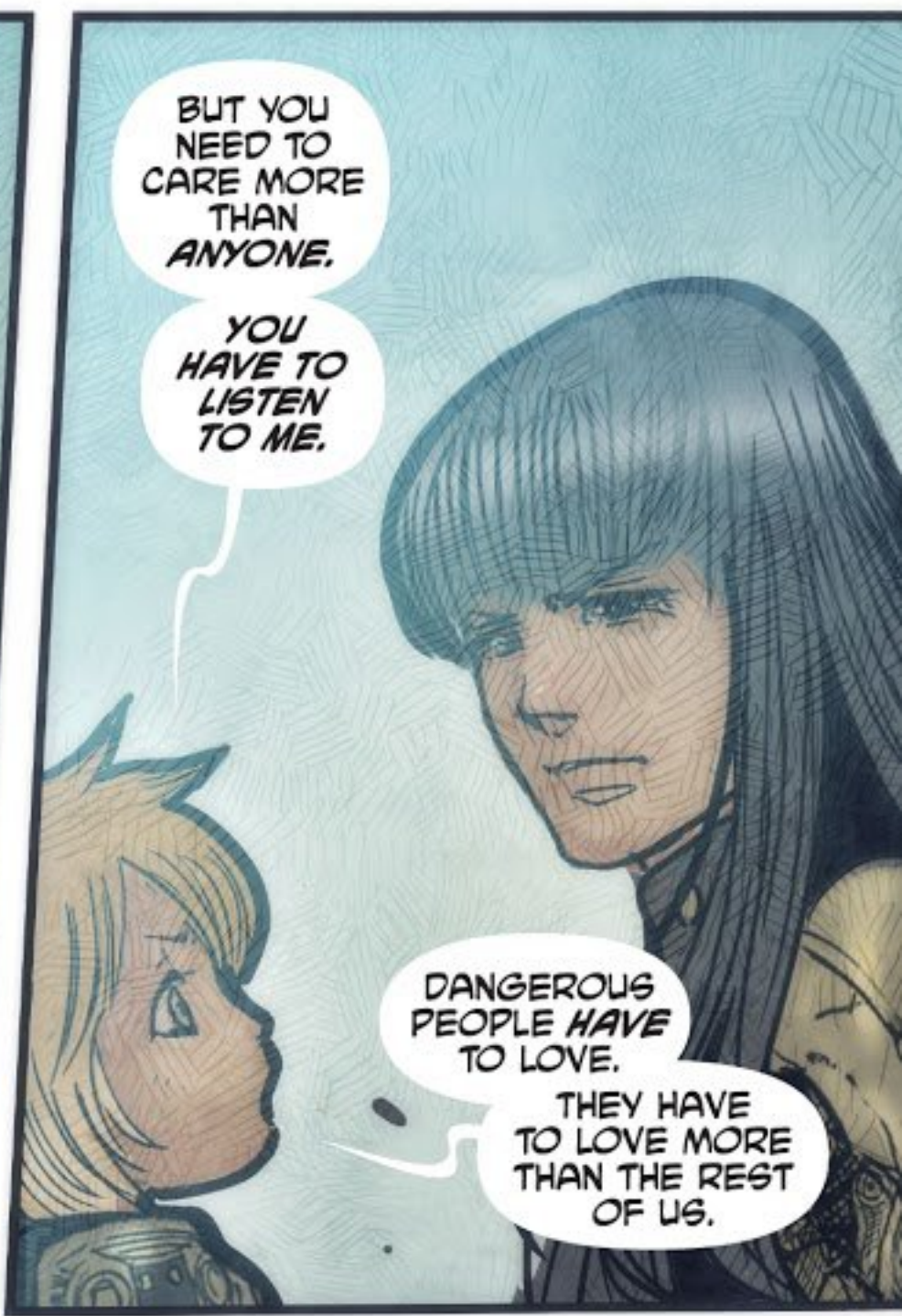
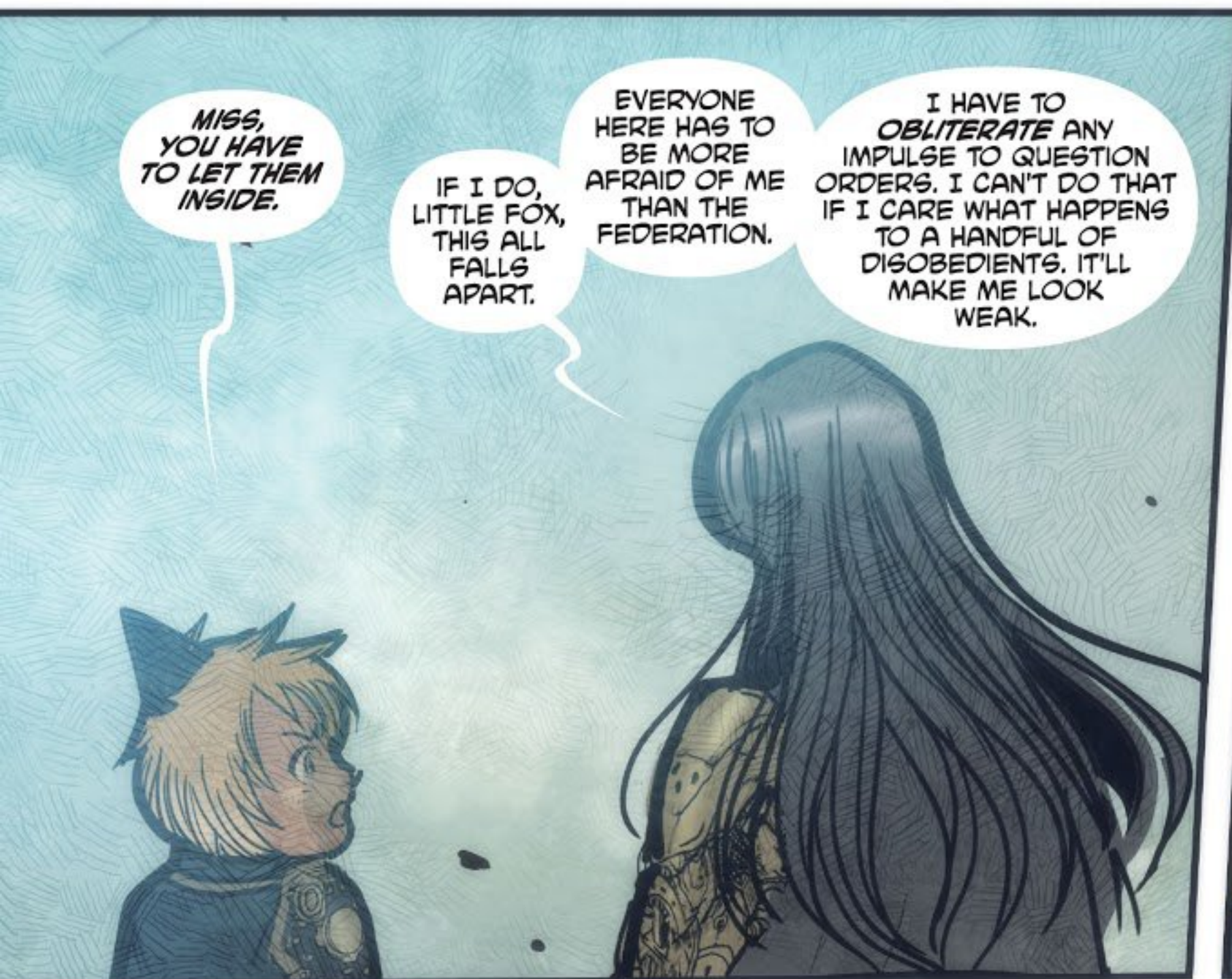
IF I DO, LITTLE FOX, THIS ALL FALLS APART.

EVERYONE HERE HAS TO BE MORE AFRAID OF ME THAN THE FEDERATION.

I HAVE TO *OBLITERATE* ANY IMPULSE TO QUESTION ORDERS. I CAN'T DO THAT IF I CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO A HANDFUL OF DISOBEIENTS. IT'LL MAKE ME LOOK WEAK.

BUT YOU NEED TO CARE MORE THAN *ANYONE*.

YOU HAVE TO *LISTEN* TO ME.



DANGEROUS PEOPLE *HAVE* TO LOVE.

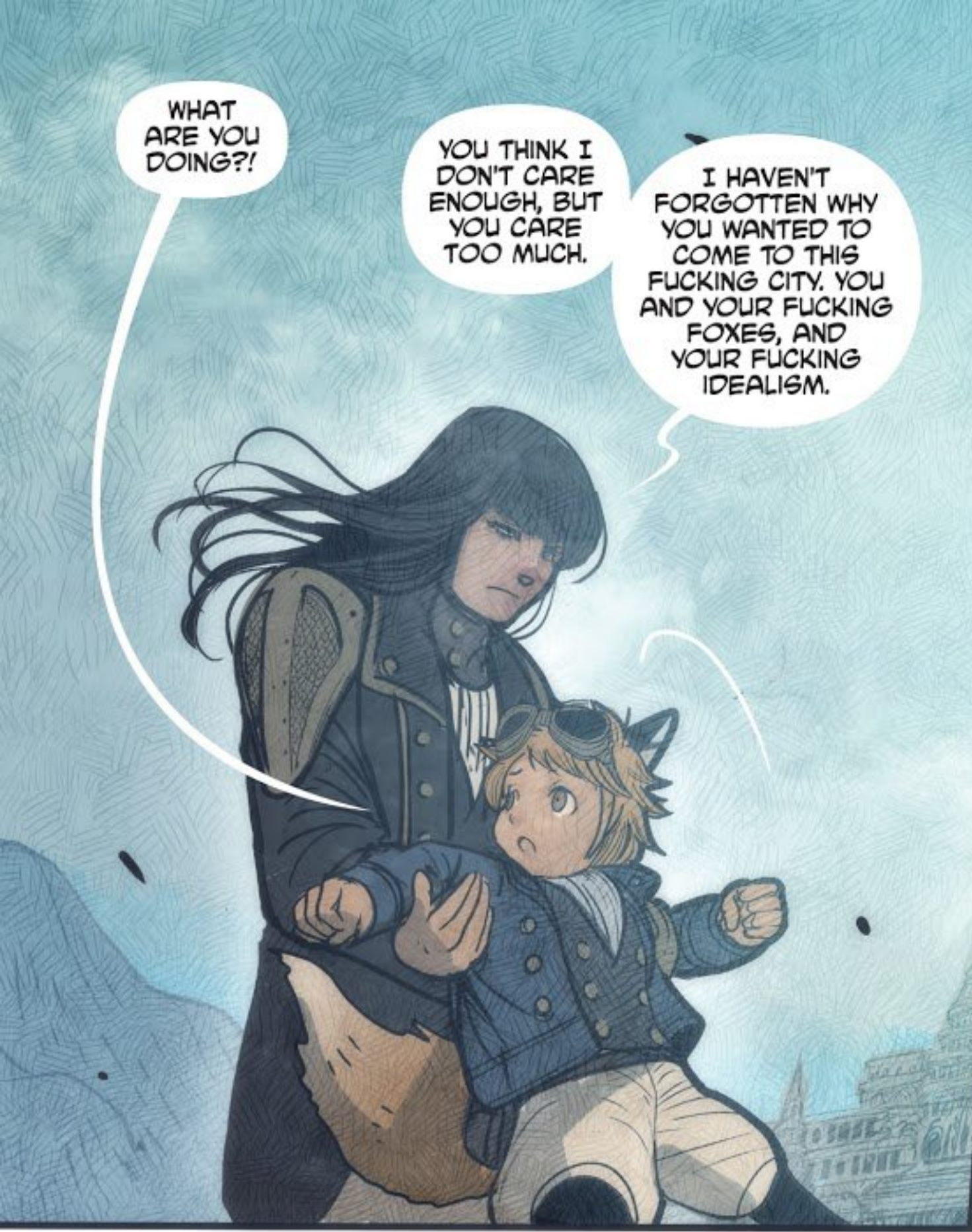
THEY HAVE TO LOVE MORE THAN THE REST OF US.



OR ELSE... TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN.

TERRIBLE THINGS, HUH?

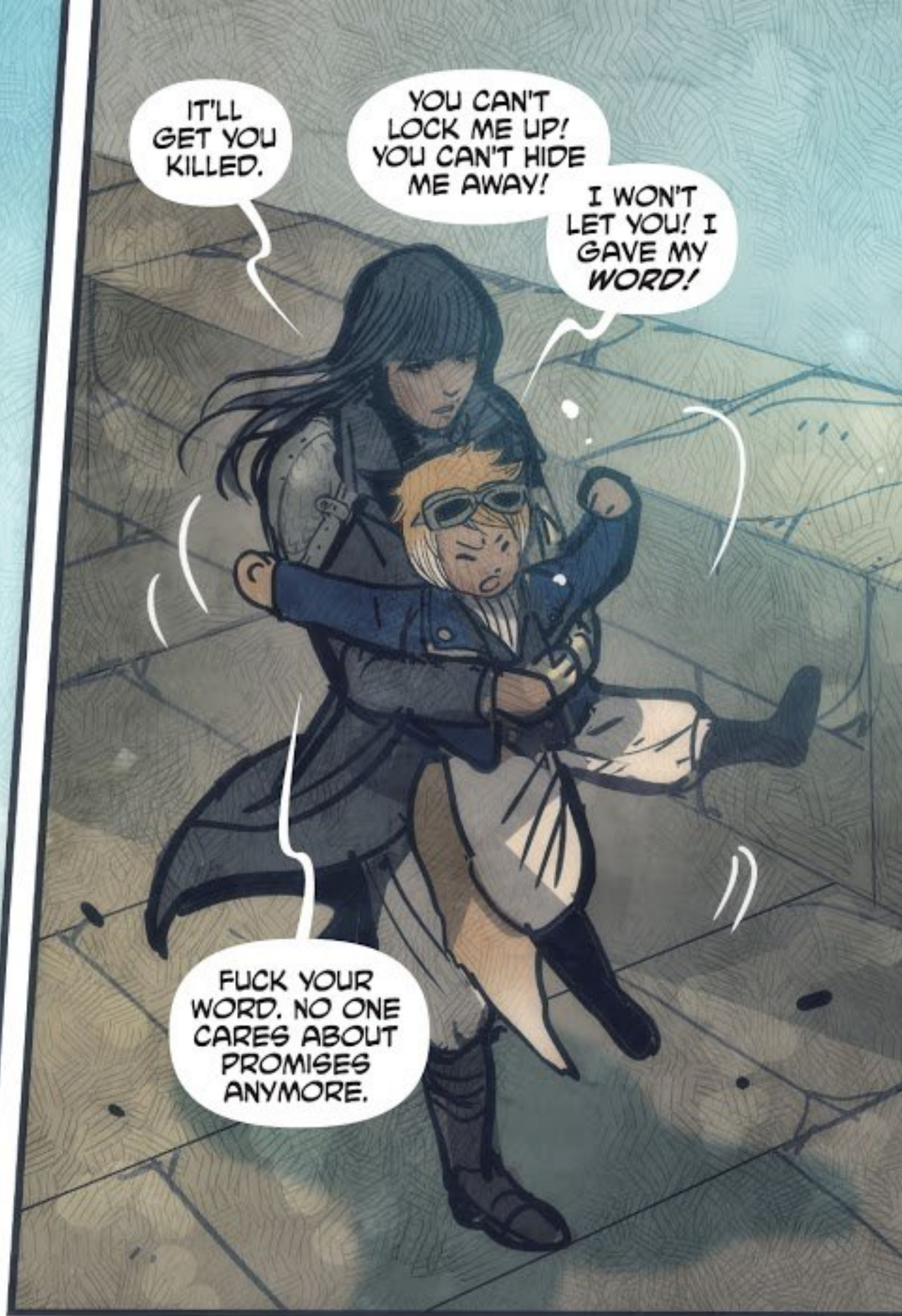
LOVE HAS NEVER STOPPED *THAT* FROM HAPPENING.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

YOU THINK I DON'T CARE ENOUGH, BUT YOU CARE TOO MUCH.

I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN WHY YOU WANTED TO COME TO THIS FUCKING CITY. YOU AND YOUR FUCKING FOXES, AND YOUR FUCKING IDEALISM.

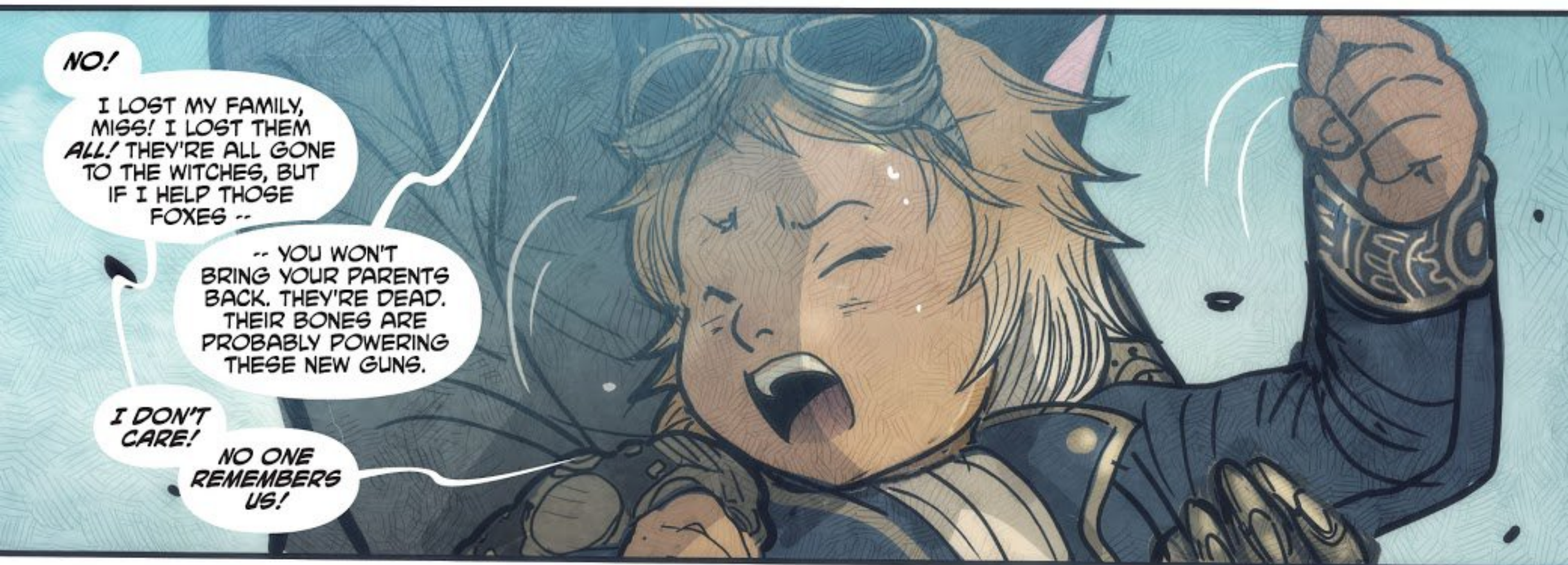


IT'LL GET YOU KILLED.

YOU CAN'T LOCK ME UP! YOU CAN'T HIDE ME AWAY!

I WON'T LET YOU! I GAVE MY WORD!

FUCK YOUR WORD. NO ONE CARES ABOUT PROMISES ANYMORE.



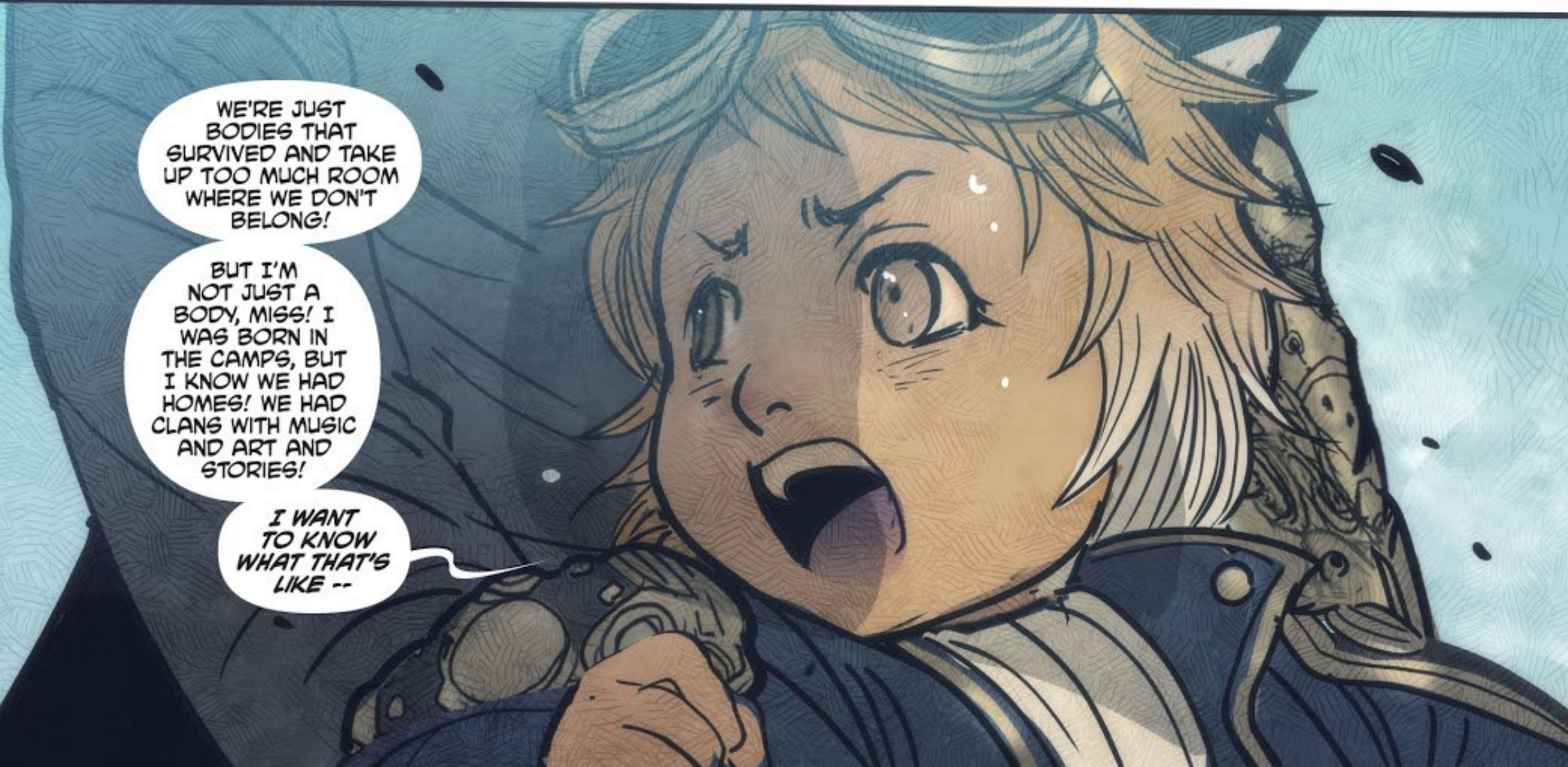
NO!

I LOST MY FAMILY, MISS! I LOST THEM ALL! THEY'RE ALL GONE TO THE WITCHES, BUT IF I HELP THOSE FOXES --

-- YOU WON'T BRING YOUR PARENTS BACK. THEY'RE DEAD. THEIR BONES ARE PROBABLY POWERING THESE NEW GUNS.

I DON'T CARE!

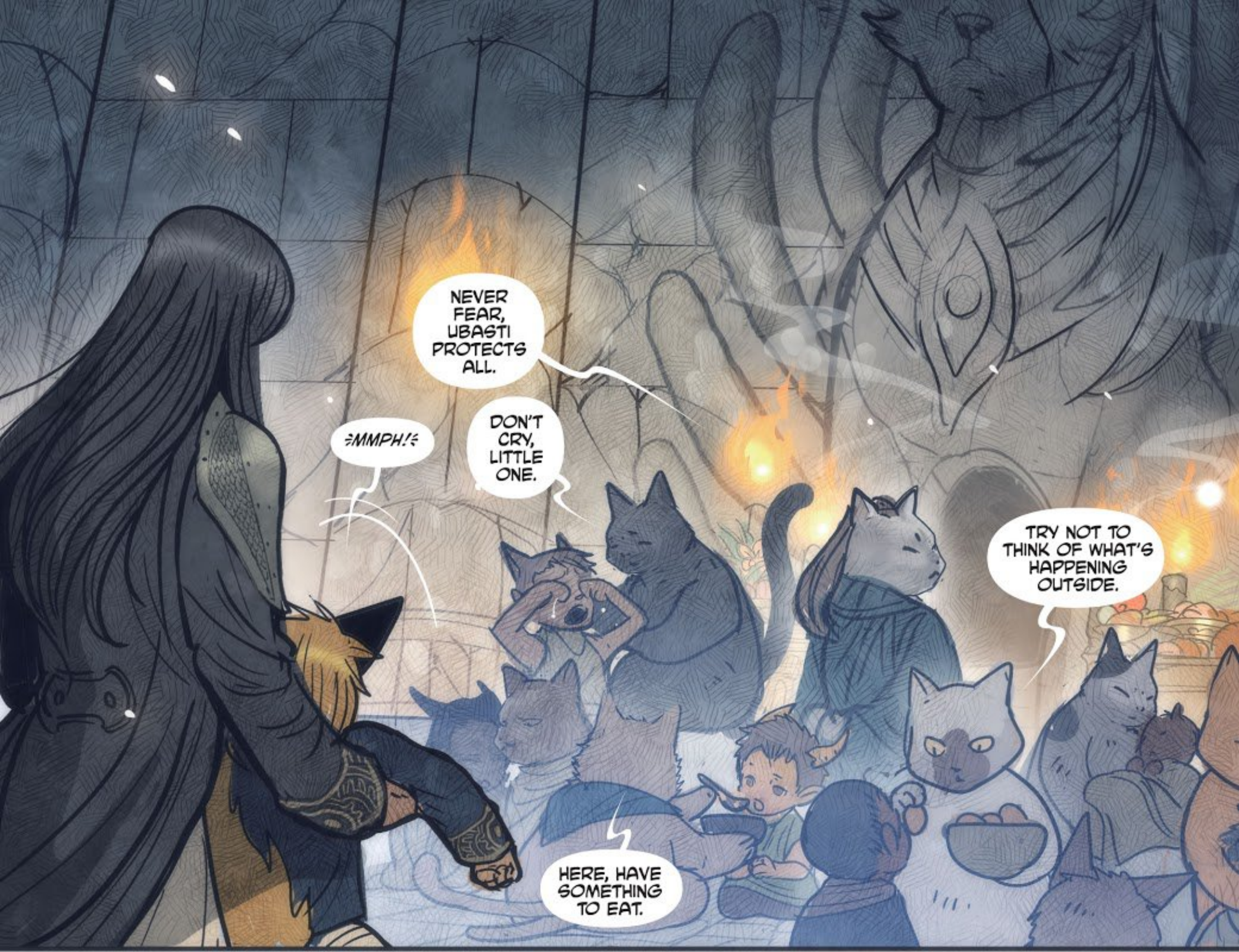
NO ONE REMEMBERS US!



WE'RE JUST BODIES THAT SURVIVED AND TAKE UP TOO MUCH ROOM WHERE WE DON'T BELONG!

BUT I'M NOT JUST A BODY, MISS! I WAS BORN IN THE CAMPS, BUT I KNOW WE HAD HOMES! WE HAD CLANS WITH MUSIC AND ART AND STORIES!

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE --



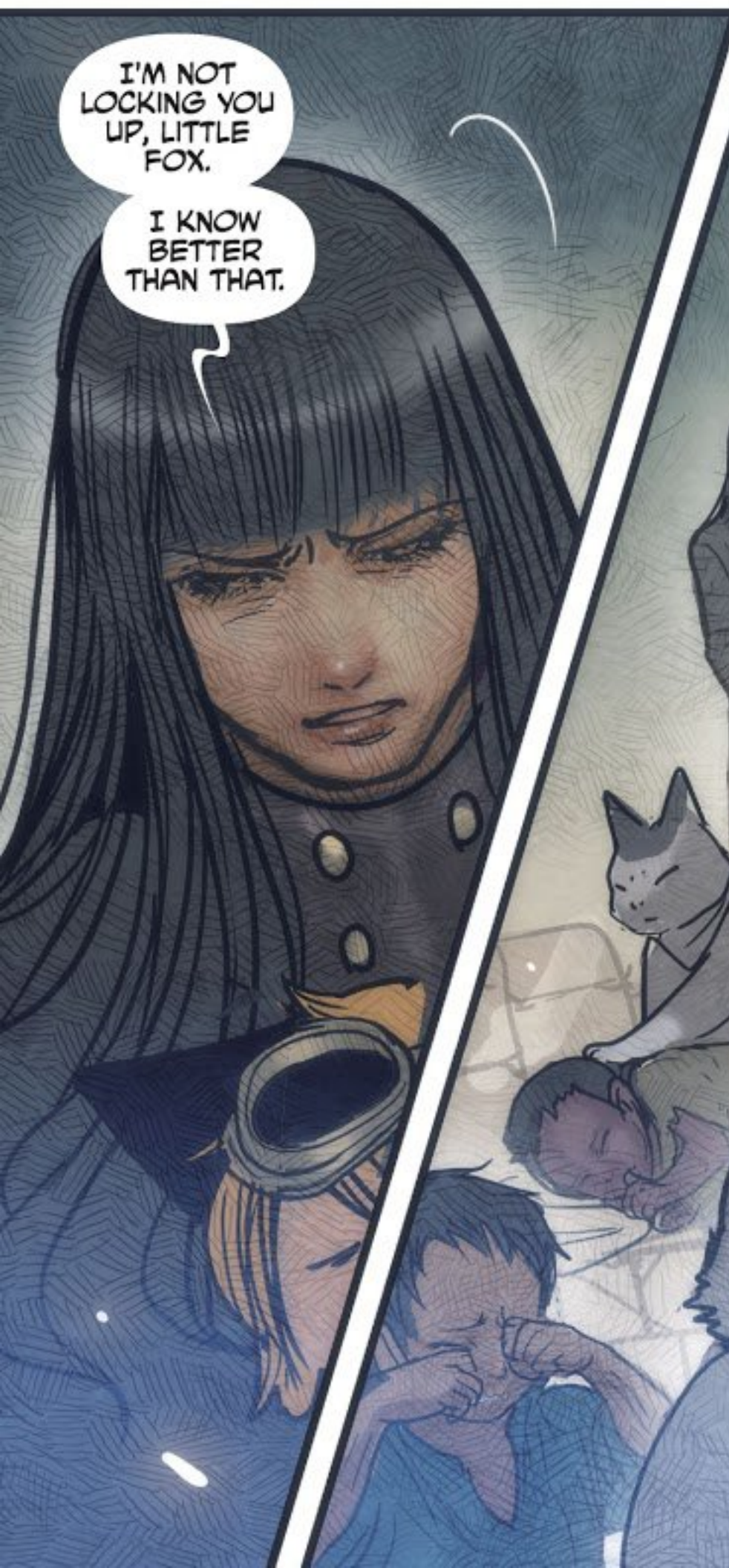
NEVER
FEAR,
UBASTI
PROTECTS
ALL.

MMMPH!<

DON'T
CRY,
LITTLE
ONE.

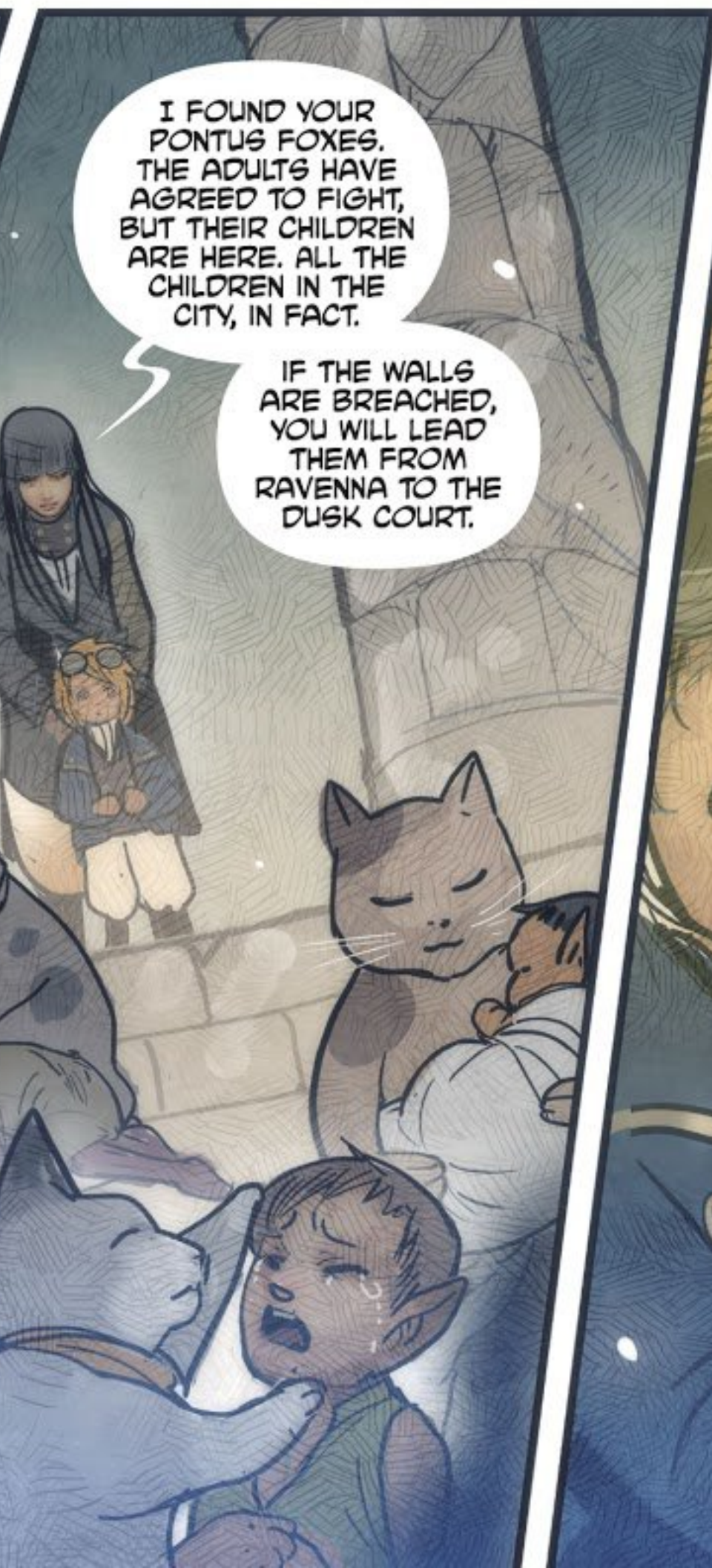
TRY NOT TO
THINK OF WHAT'S
HAPPENING
OUTSIDE.

HERE, HAVE
SOMETHING
TO EAT.



I'M NOT
LOCKING YOU
UP, LITTLE
FOX.

I KNOW
BETTER
THAN THAT.



I FOUND YOUR
PONTUS FOXES.
THE ADULTS HAVE
AGREED TO FIGHT,
BUT THEIR CHILDREN
ARE HERE. ALL THE
CHILDREN IN THE
CITY, IN FACT.

IF THE WALLS
ARE BREACHED,
YOU WILL LEAD
THEM FROM
RAVENNA TO THE
DUSK COURT.



THIS IS FROM CORVIN.
IT'S THE INSIGNIA OF
HIS FAMILY. HE SAID IT
WOULD GIVE YOU
SAFE PASSAGE INTO
THE COURT.

AND THIS...
WAS MY MOTHER'S.
IT WILL ALSO BE...
RECOGNIZED.



MISS...

LISTEN
FOR THE
BELLS.



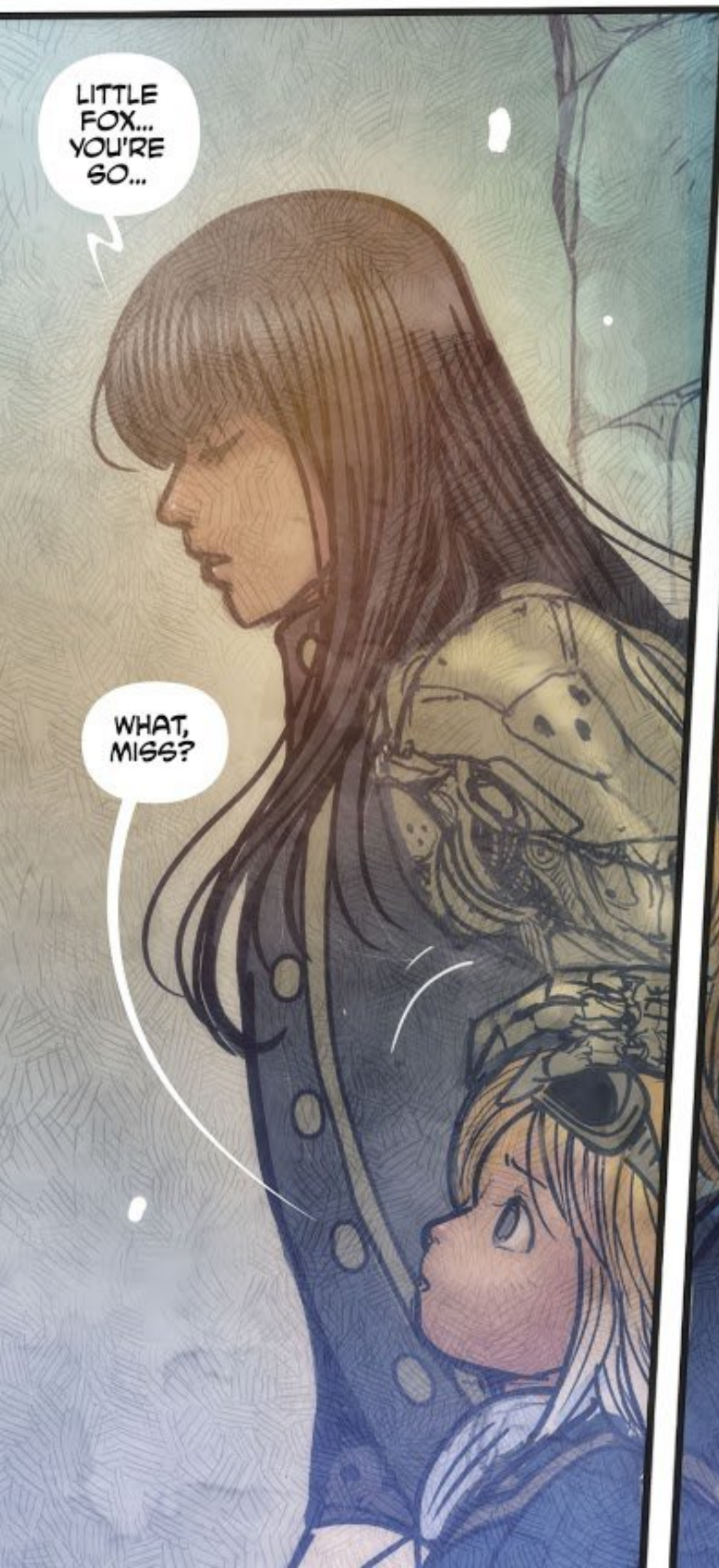
IF YOU
HEAR THEM,
DON'T WAIT,
JUST GO.



YOU NEVER
WANTED TO COME TO
RAVENNA. YOU WERE
SUPPOSED TO GO
FIND THE *MASK*.

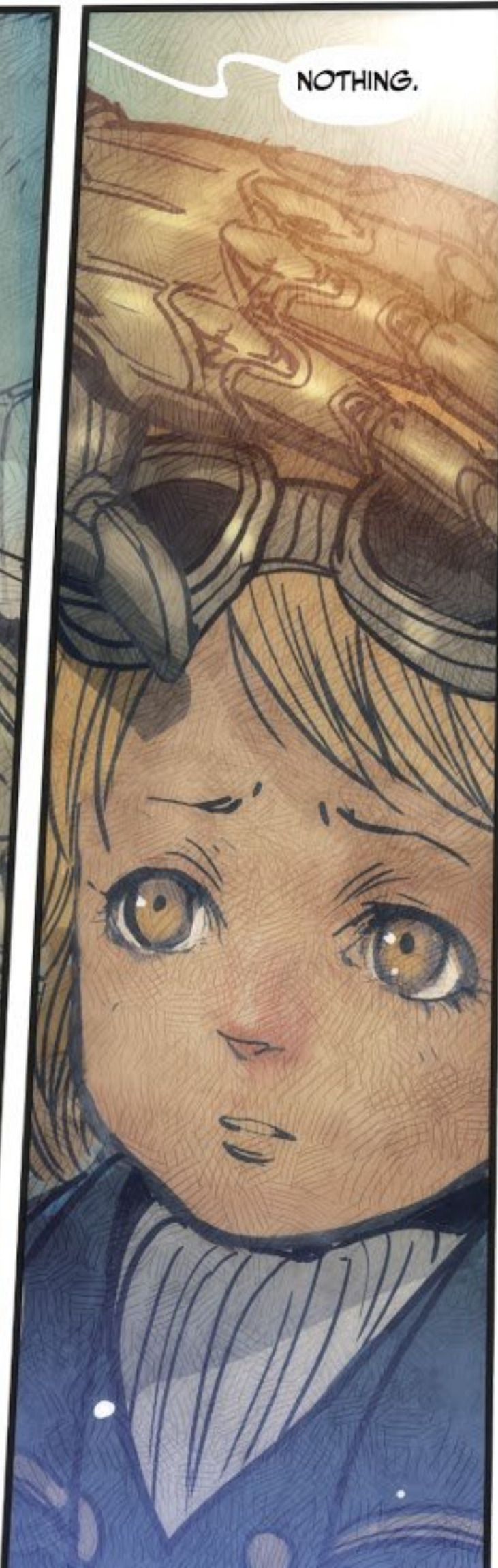
BUT YOU
STAYED. YOU'RE
FIGHTING. IT'S
BECAUSE
YOU CARE.

DON'T
FORGET
THAT,
MISS. YOU
CARE.

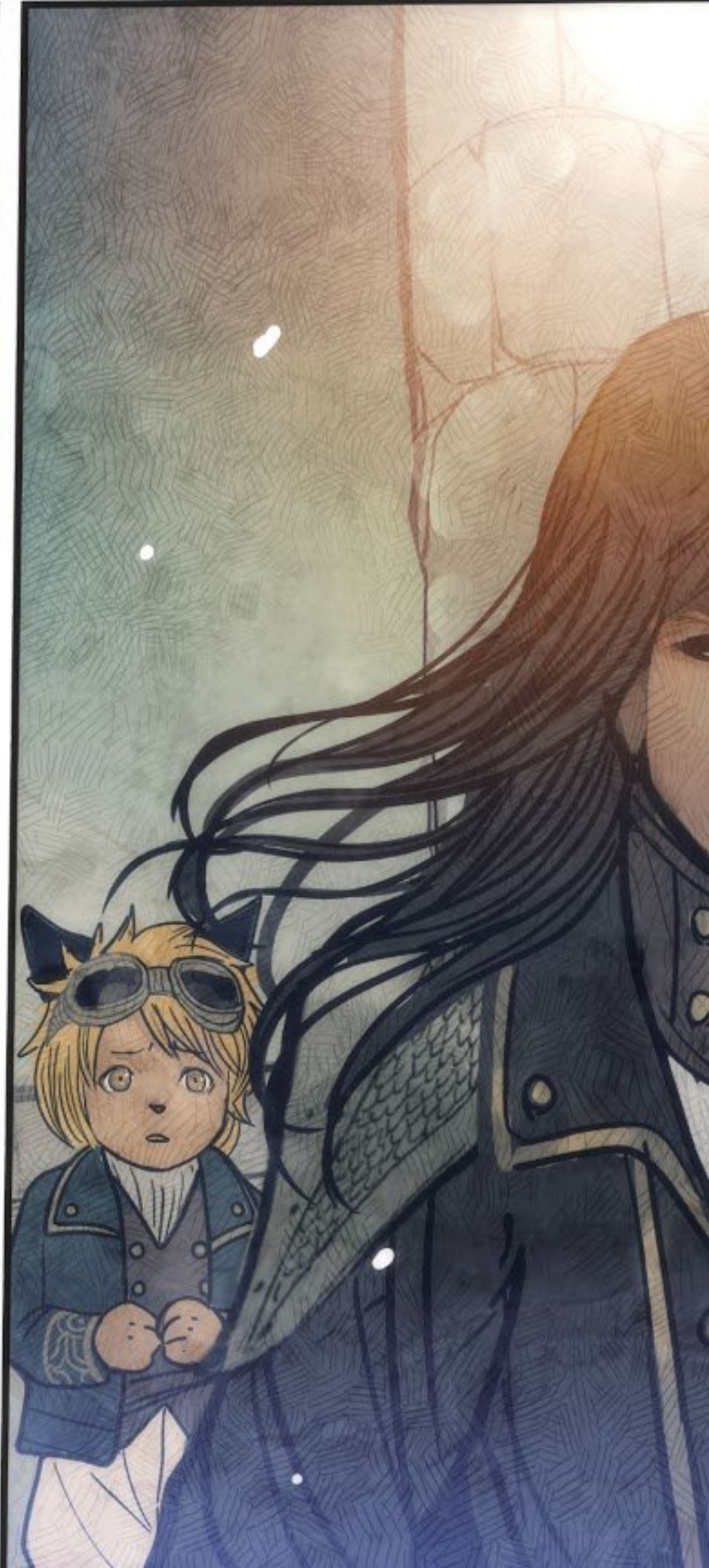


LITTLE
FOX...
YOU'RE
GO...

WHAT,
MISS?



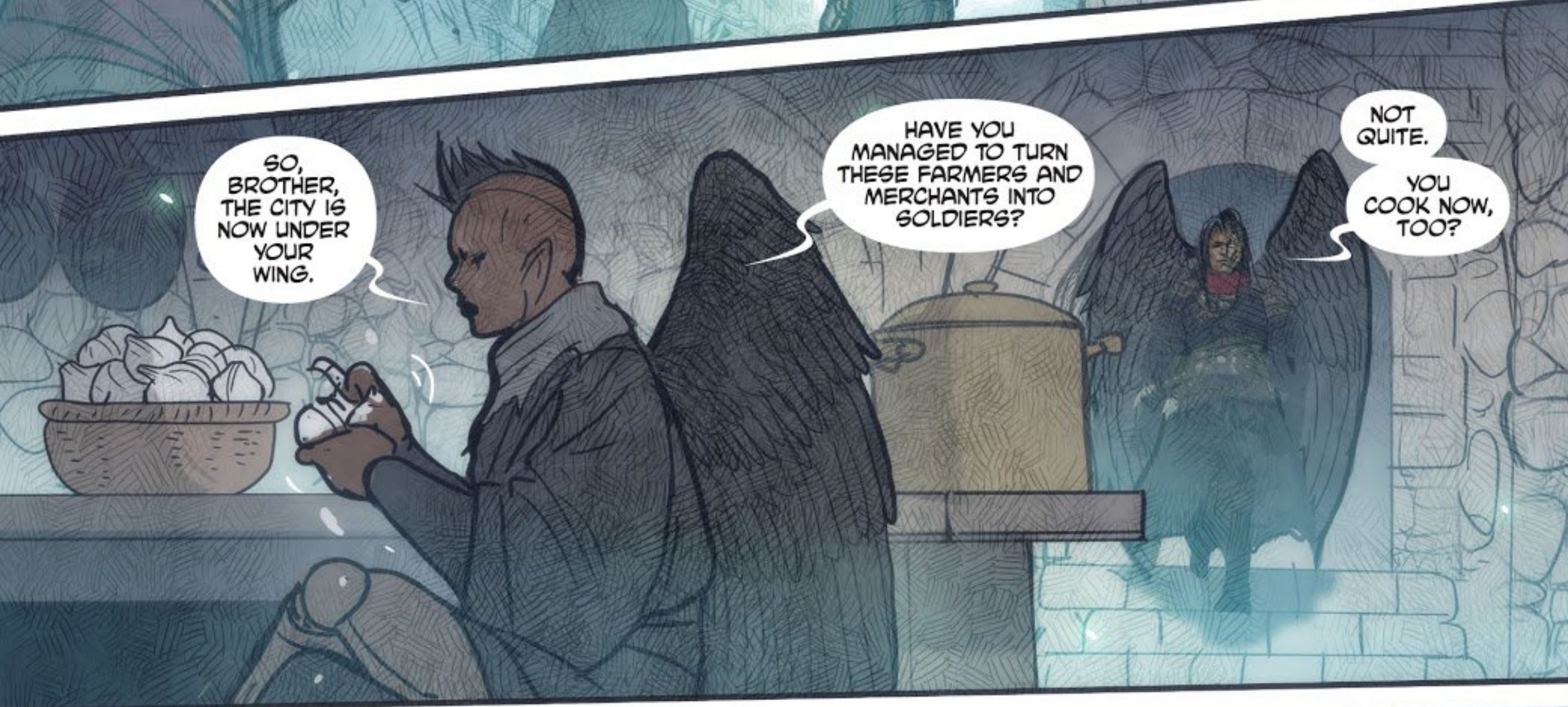
NOTHING.





...IT'S THE
HALFWOLF...

...DID YOU
HEAR WHAT
SHE DID...

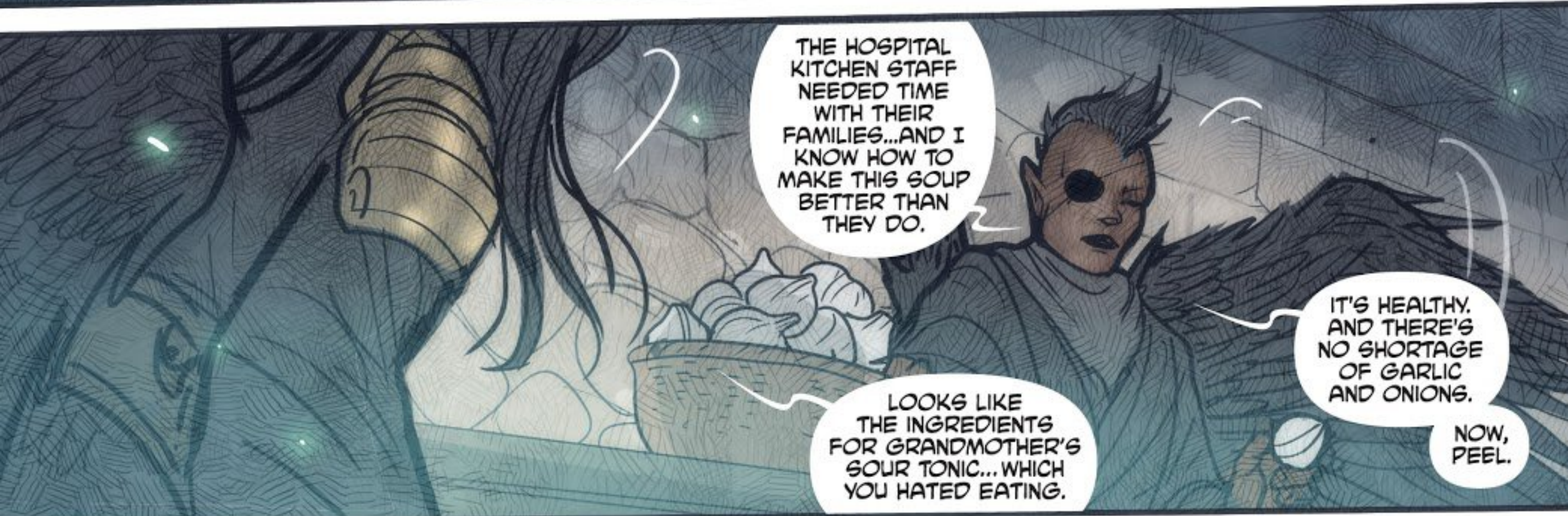


SO,
BROTHER,
THE CITY IS
NOW UNDER
YOUR WING.

HAVE YOU
MANAGED TO TURN
THESE FARMERS AND
MERCHANTS INTO
SOLDIERS?

NOT
QUITE.

YOU
COOK NOW,
TOO?

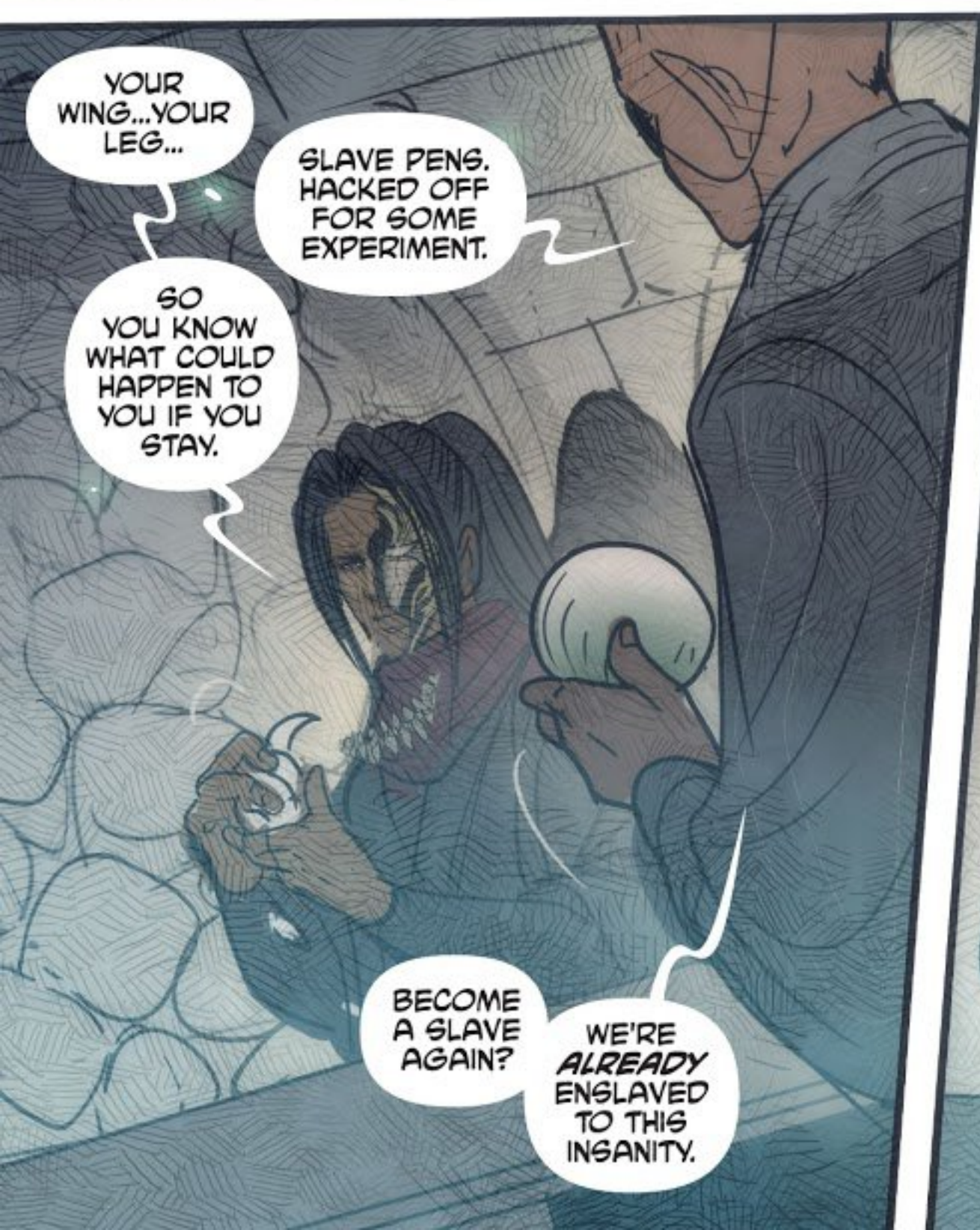


THE HOSPITAL
KITCHEN STAFF
NEEDED TIME
WITH THEIR
FAMILIES...AND I
KNOW HOW TO
MAKE THIS SOUP
BETTER THAN
THEY DO.

LOOKS LIKE
THE INGREDIENTS
FOR GRANDMOTHER'S
SOUP TONIC... WHICH
YOU HATED EATING.

IT'S HEALTHY.
AND THERE'S
NO SHORTAGE
OF GARLIC
AND ONIONS.

NOW,
PEEL.



YOUR
WING...YOUR
LEG...

SLAVE PENS.
HACKED OFF
FOR SOME
EXPERIMENT.

SO
YOU KNOW
WHAT COULD
HAPPEN TO
YOU IF YOU
STAY.

BECOME
A SLAVE
AGAIN?

WE'RE
ALREADY
ENSLAVED TO
THIS
INSANITY.



HUMANS
HATE ARCANICS,
ARCANICS HATE
HUMANS...AND ALL
OF THEM ARE
HYPOCRITES.

FOR
THOUSANDS OF
YEARS WE MADE
BABIES, MIXED
BLOOD...

...AND FOR
CENTURIES THE
FEDERATION HAS
TOUTED ITS
TECHNOLOGY, EVEN
AS IT'S BECOME
OBSESSED WITH
OUR MAGIC.

THE FEDERATION CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT WHAT IT REAPS FROM ARCANICS AND ARCANICS SURVIVE BECAUSE OF TECHNOLOGY THAT WE'VE STOLEN FROM THE FEDERATION.

TECHNOLOGY WE NEED BECAUSE OUR OWN MAGIC IS FADING.

BUT NO ONE TALKS ABOUT THAT. NO ONE TALKS ABOUT HOW MUCH WE WANT AND NEED EACH OTHER. HOW WE'RE ALREADY A PART OF EACH OTHER.

WHAT DOES ANY OF THAT HAVE TO DO WITH YOUR SURVIVAL?

WITH THE SURVIVAL OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN RAVENNA? INCLUDING YOUR PATIENTS?

OH, CORVIN... IRONY WAS ALWAYS LOST ON YOU.

SO DESPERATE TO PLEASE OUR PARENTS YOU NEVER EVEN LEARNED TO LAUGH. HOW SAD IS THAT?

SO AFRAID OF NOT BEING PERFECT... TERRIFIED OF EXPRESSING ANY KIND OF NEED.

THE SHAME OF DISAPPOINTING OUR ELDERS WOULD SEND YOU INTO SUCH MOODS. YOU'D SHED FEATHERS FOR WEEKS FROM THE STRESS.

AND YOU WOULD KEEP THOSE FEATHERS IN A BOX FOR ME. YOU AND SHERA, AND DANNA.

NOW SHERA IS DEAD, AND DANNA MIGHT AS WELL BE.

ALL I HAVE LEFT IS YOU, BETTANI.

I'VE NEVER SEEN YOUR EYES SO SOFT. NOT SINCE YOU WERE A CHILD.

MAYBE THERE'S HOPE FOR YOU, AFTER ALL.

I WONDERED, WHEN I SAW YOU HERE...IF SOMETHING HAD CHANGED.

BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT... ACTING NORMAL. YOU'RE NOT... ACTING LIKE MY BROTHER.

BECAUSE THE BROTHER I KNOW WOULD NOT BE STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH THE INCARNATION OF THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS.

AREN'T THOSE THE PROPHECIES?

THAT'S *HER*, ISN'T IT? SHE WHO WILL EAT THE WORLD? CRACK THE STARS, TURN US TO ASH, MAKE US DRINK BLOOD?



WEREN'T YOU THE CHOSEN ONE, YOU AND THE BARONESS, DESTINED AT BIRTH BY THE ORACLES TO SAVE US? ORDAINED TO SLAY HER?

MOTHER WAS *ALWAYS* SO PROUD OF THAT.

BETTANI... I THINK... I THINK THE ORACLES WERE WRONG.



CORVIN?

AFTER SHERA DIED, I VISITED THE ORACLES AGAIN.

WHAT? YOU DARED VISIT THEM ALONE? THEY SPOKE TO YOU?

NOT... EXACTLY.



BROTHER... WHO HAVE YOU BECOME...?

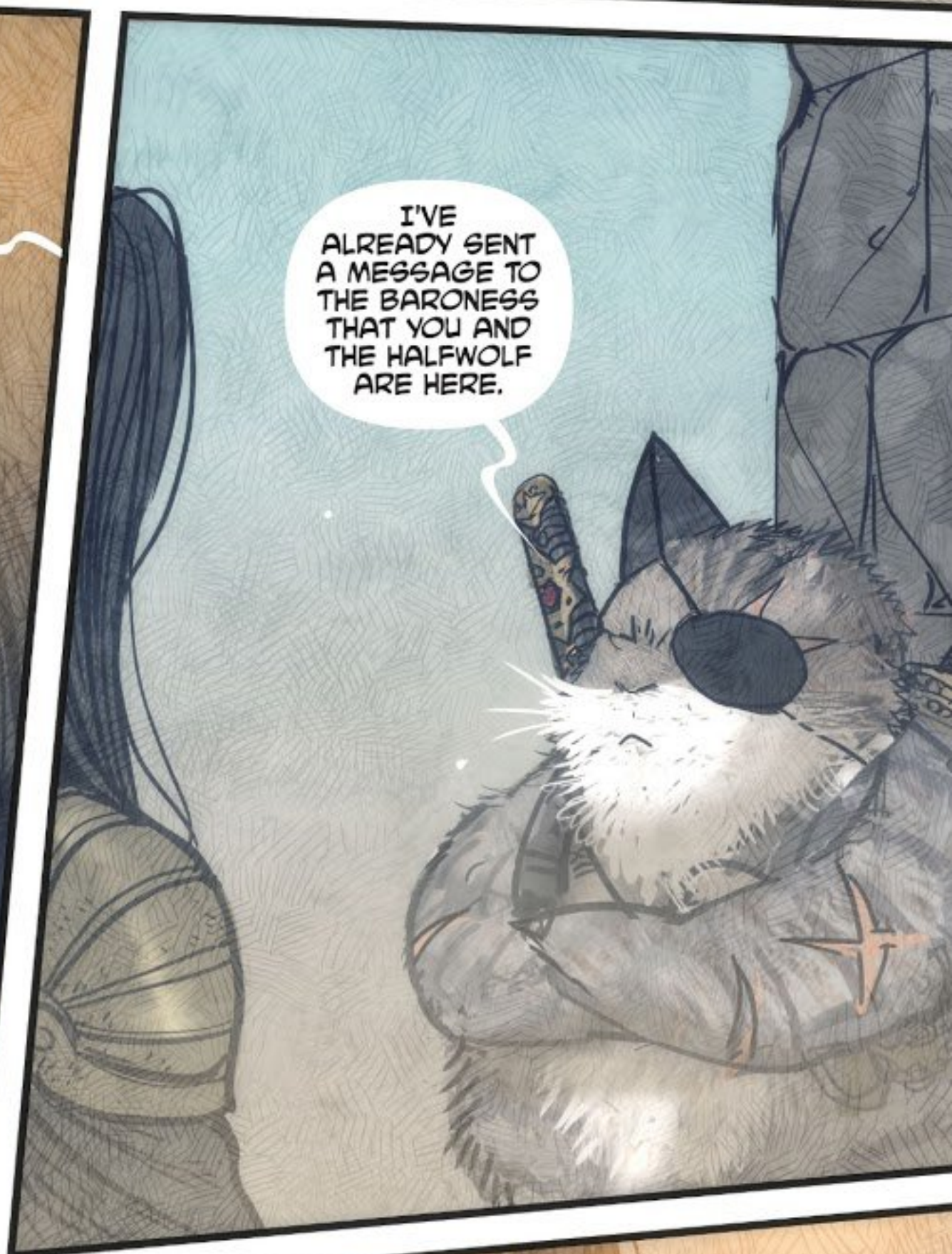


SIGH

YOU LOOK BETTER THAN I EXPECTED, FOR A CROW WHO HAS SPENT WEEKS IN THE COMPANY OF A MONSTER.

TANNO.

I HAD A FEELING I'D SEE YOU SOON.

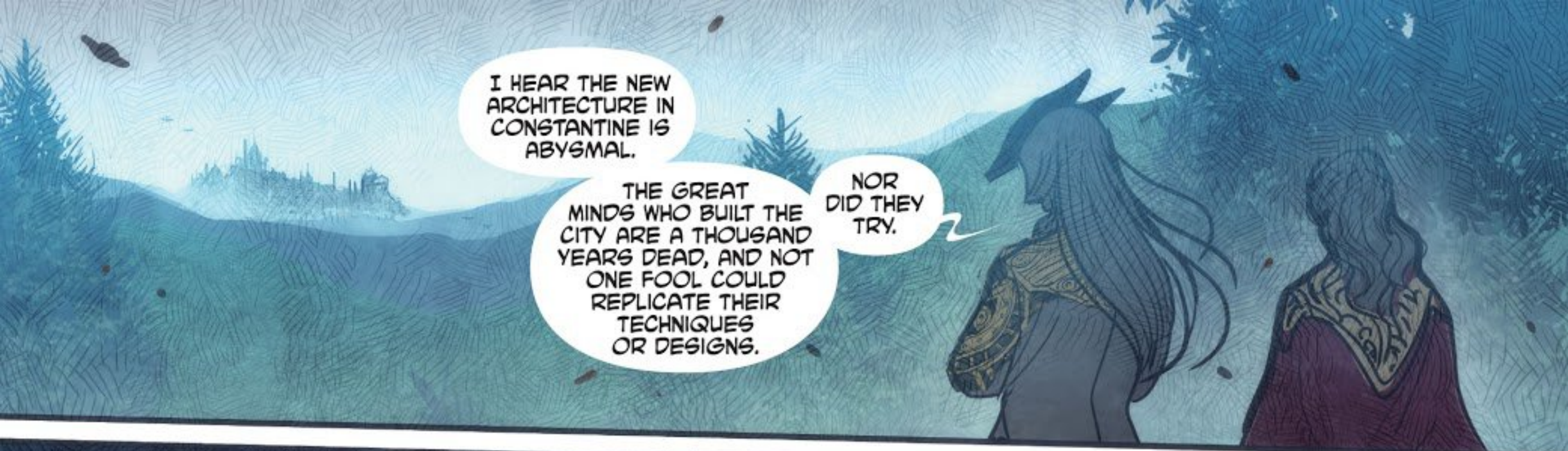


I'VE ALREADY SENT A MESSAGE TO THE BARONESS THAT YOU AND THE HALFWOLF ARE HERE.



IT'S TIME TO FULFILL YOUR DUTIES, LORD CORVIN.

BEFORE THE FEDERATION ARRIVES IN RAVENNA.



I HEAR THE NEW ARCHITECTURE IN CONSTANTINE IS ABYSMAL.

THE GREAT MINDS WHO BUILT THE CITY ARE A THOUSAND YEARS DEAD, AND NOT ONE FOOL COULD REPLICATE THEIR TECHNIQUES OR DESIGNS.

NOR DID THEY TRY.



THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO BUILD WITH AFTER THE WAR, DEAR WIFE. NO STONE, NO WOOD. NO COIN.

NOT EVEN FOOLS.

CONSTANTINE, AT LEAST, IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN LIVE AGAIN...EVEN IF IT'S UGLY.

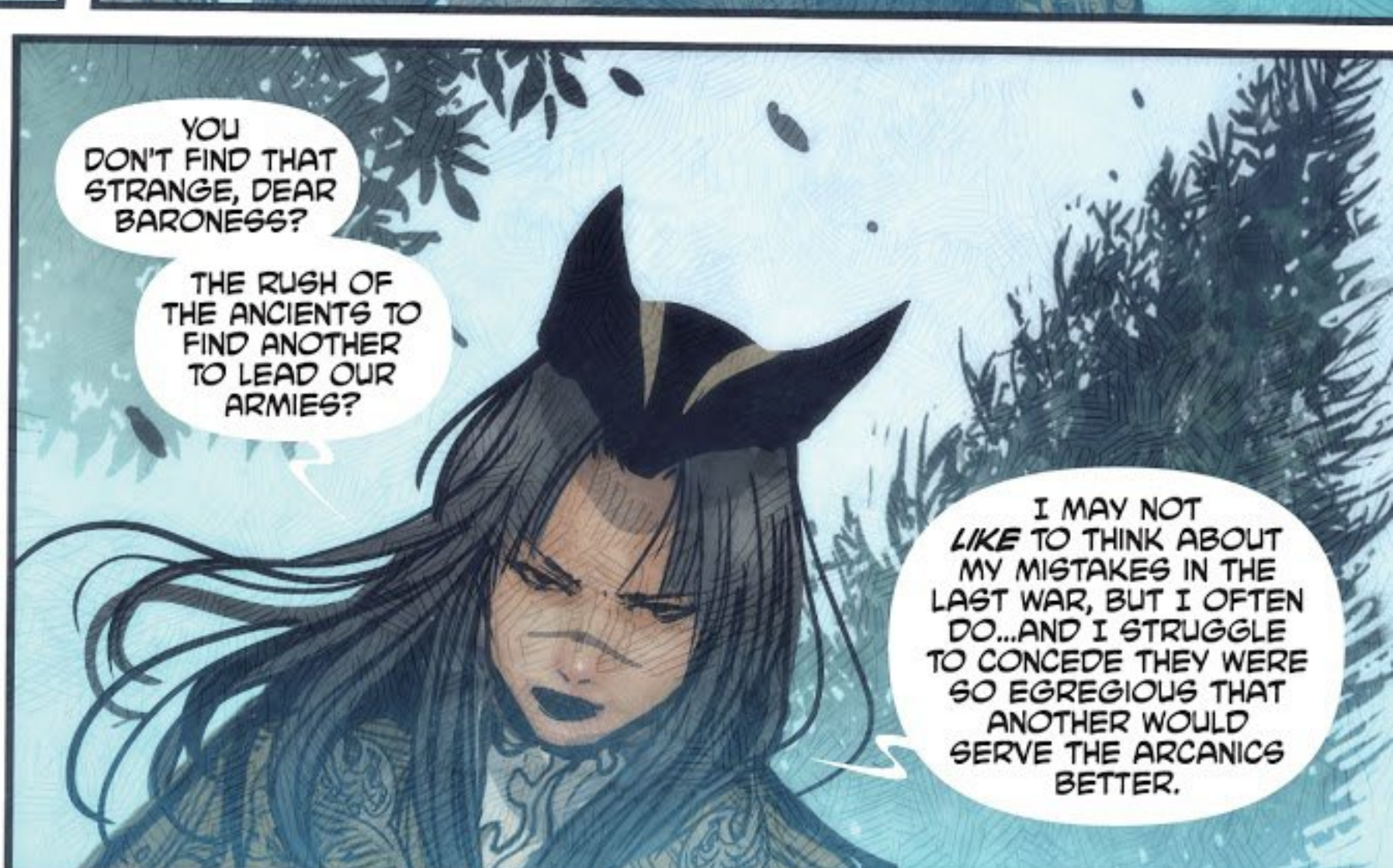


HAVE YOU RECEIVED WORD FROM THE GREY RIDERS REGARDING YOUR SISTER'S DAUGHTER?

HA. HAVE YOU?



YOUR GREY RIDERS ARE OF LITTLE CONCERN TO MY SPIES. THEIR FOCUS IS ON YOUR IMMINENT DISMISSAL FROM THE DUSK COURT.



YOU DON'T FIND THAT STRANGE, DEAR BARONESS?

THE RUSH OF THE ANCIENTS TO FIND ANOTHER TO LEAD OUR ARMIES?

I MAY NOT LIKE TO THINK ABOUT MY MISTAKES IN THE LAST WAR, BUT I OFTEN DO...AND I STRUGGLE TO CONCEDE THEY WERE SO EGREGIOUS THAT ANOTHER WOULD SERVE THE ARCANICS BETTER.



CONSTANTINE MAY HAVE SAVED US...

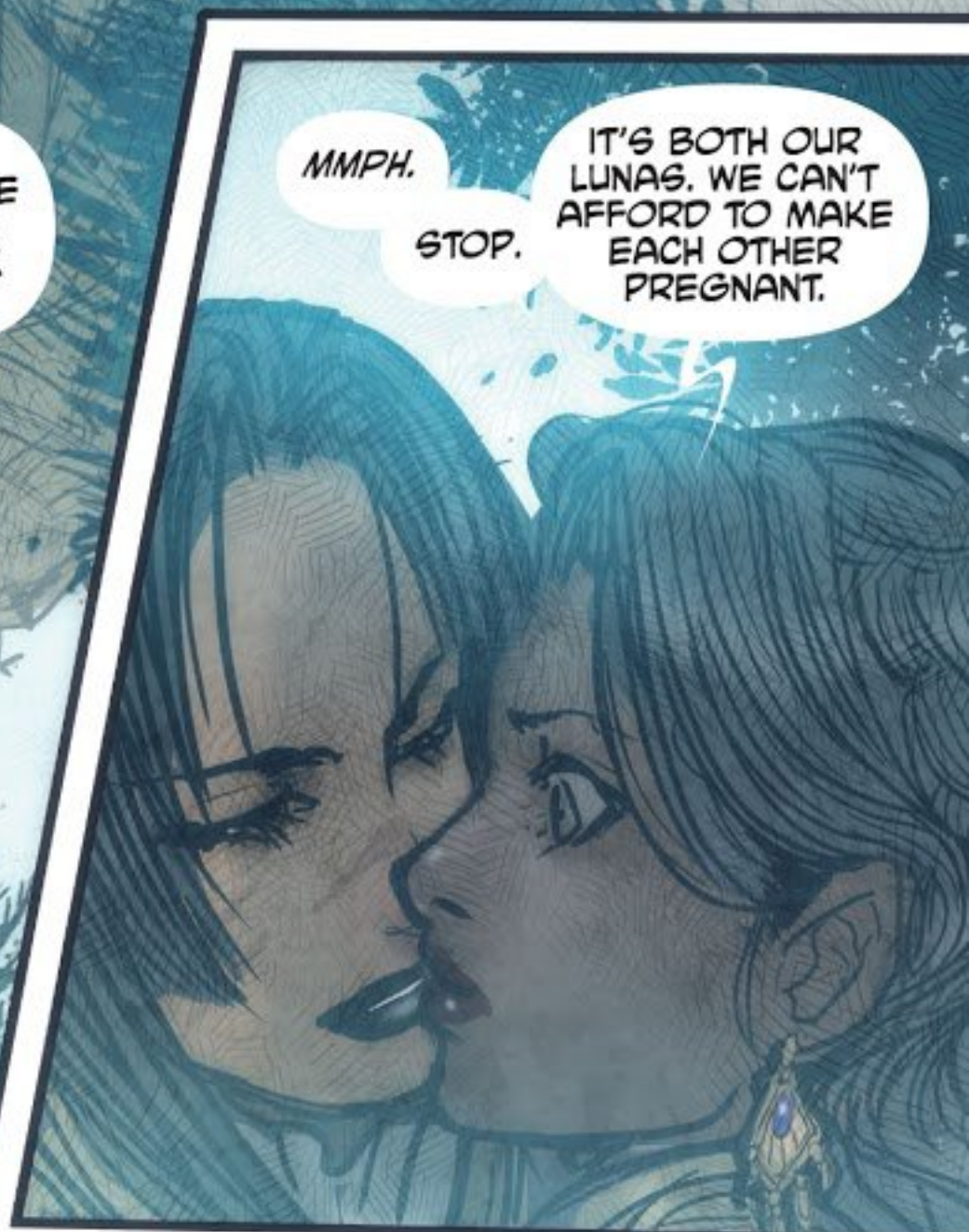
...BUT I KEPT US ALIVE LONG ENOUGH FOR A MIRACLE. THE REST QUAILED, BUT I NEVER DID.



YOU WILL
STAY HERE AND
WAIT FOR THE
FEDERATION ENVOY
TO GIVE YOU THEIR
ANSWER?

YES. I'LL
FOLLOW YOU TO
THE DUSK
COURT IN A
DAY OR --

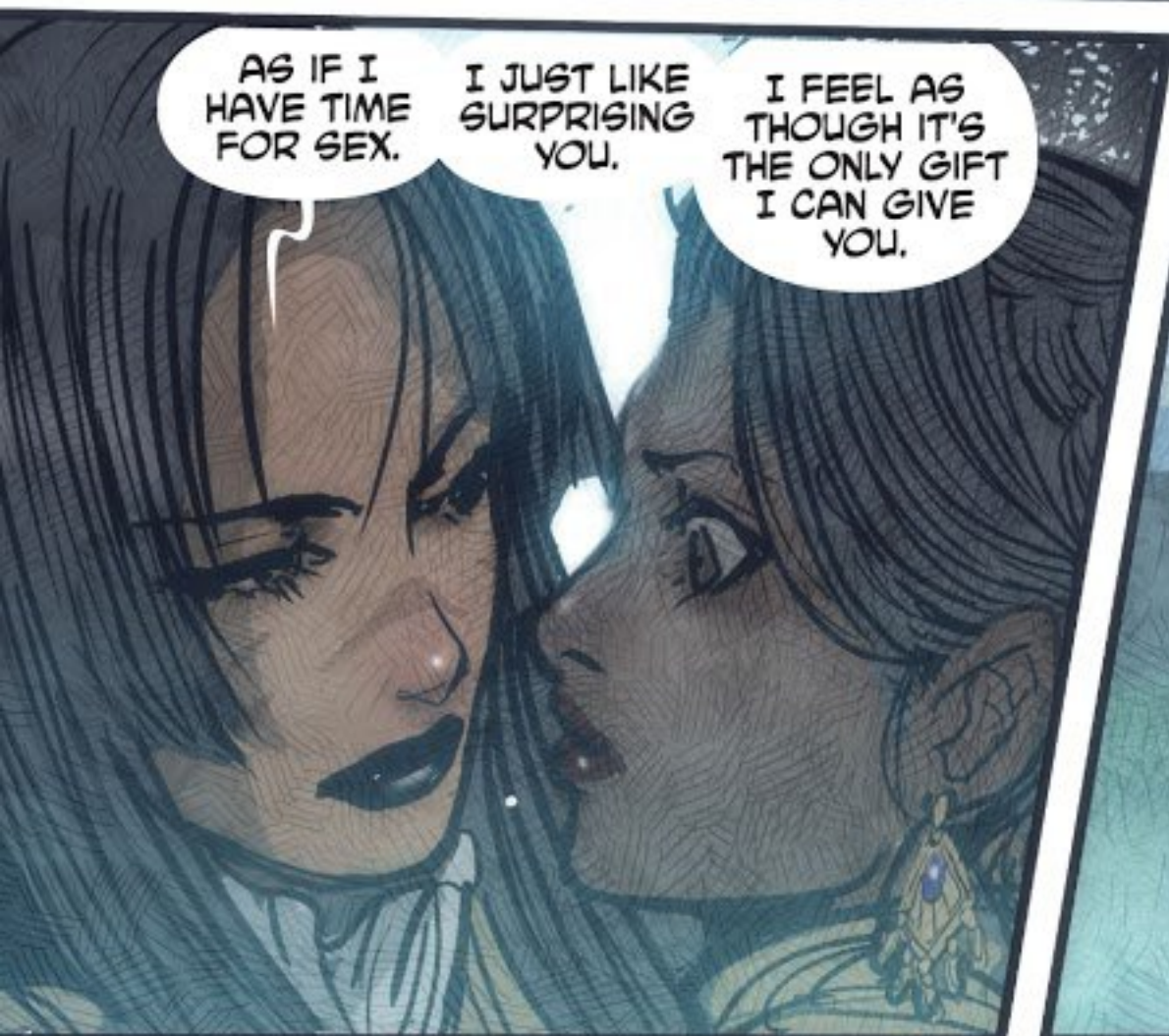
I'M NOT
TAKING THE
FLEET TO
THE DUSK
COURT.



MMPH.

STOP.

IT'S BOTH OUR
LUNAS. WE CAN'T
AFFORD TO MAKE
EACH OTHER
PREGNANT.



AS IF I
HAVE TIME
FOR SEX.

I JUST LIKE
SURPRISING
YOU.

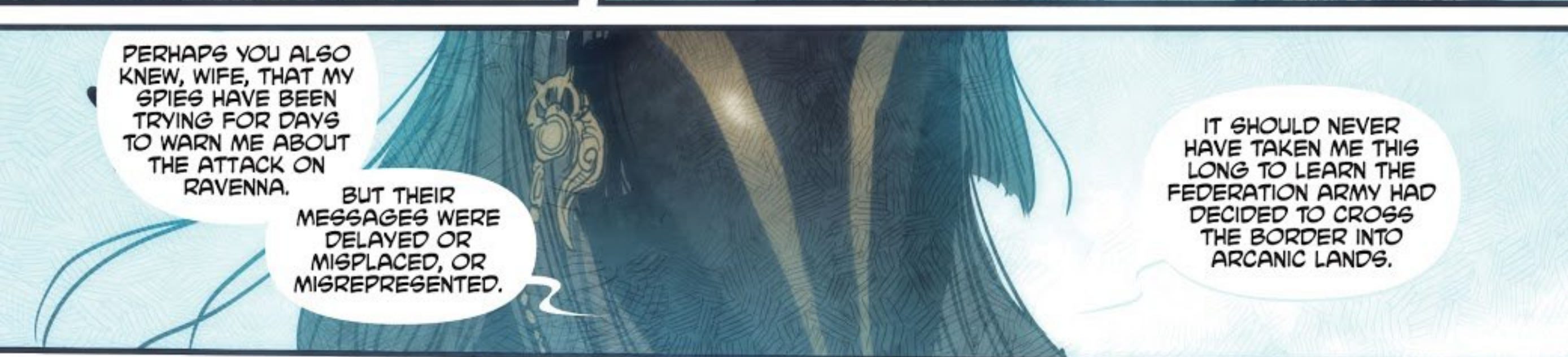
I FEEL AS
THOUGH IT'S
THE ONLY GIFT
I CAN GIVE
YOU.



I'M FLYING
TO RAVENNA. I
RECEIVED WORD
AN HOUR AGO
THAT THE
FEDERATION IS
MARCHING ON
THE CITY.

BUT YOU
ALREADY
KNEW ABOUT
THAT, DIDN'T
YOU?

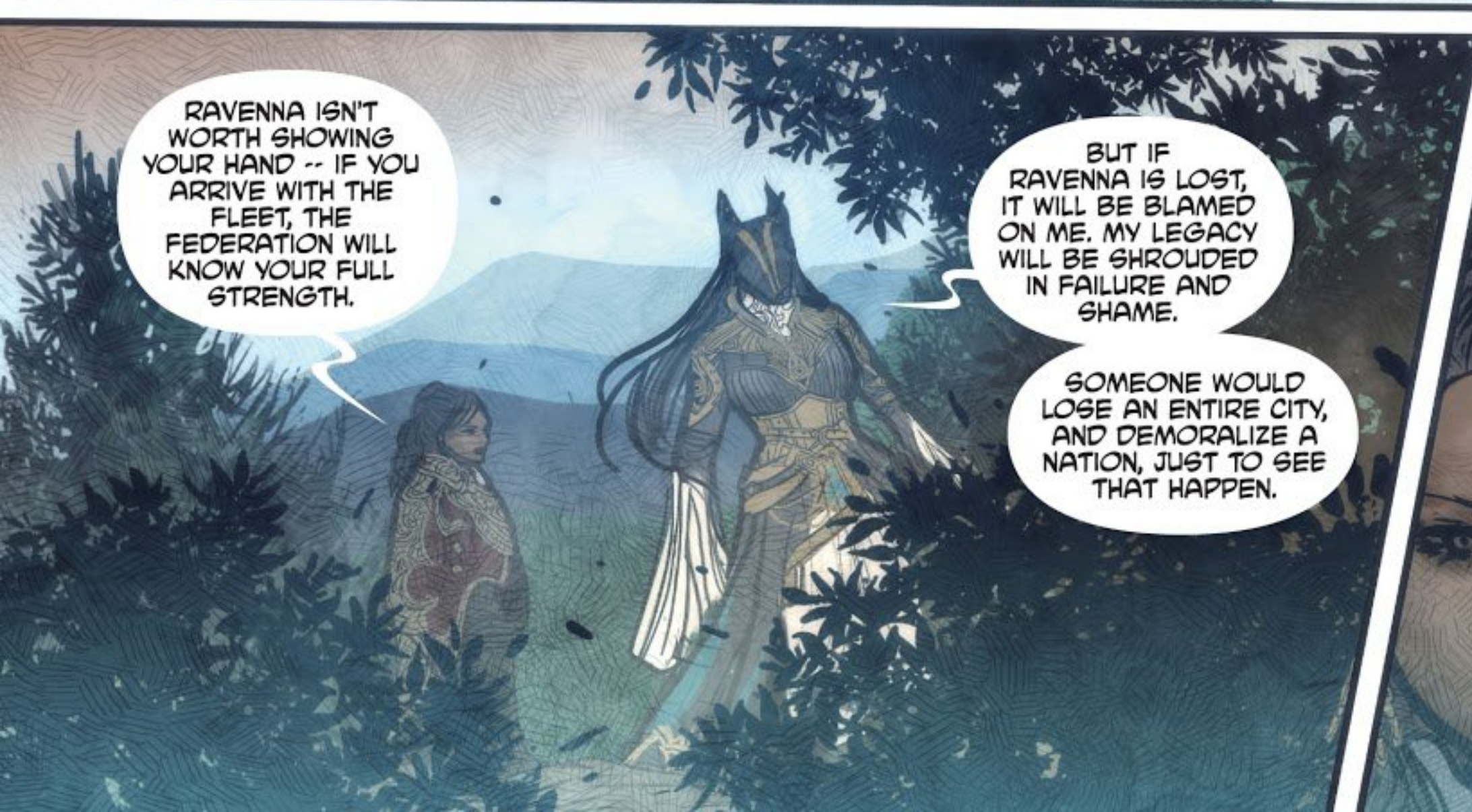
IT'S...
TOO LATE TO
HELP THEM. I
DIDN'T WANT TO
TROUBLE YOU
WHEN YOU HAVE
LARGER
CONCERNS.



PERHAPS YOU ALSO
KNEW, WIFE, THAT MY
SPIES HAVE BEEN
TRYING FOR DAYS
TO WARN ME ABOUT
THE ATTACK ON
RAVENNA.

BUT THEIR
MESSAGES WERE
DELAYED OR
MISPLACED, OR
MISREPRESENTED.

IT SHOULD NEVER
HAVE TAKEN ME THIS
LONG TO LEARN THE
FEDERATION ARMY HAD
DECIDED TO CROSS
THE BORDER INTO
ARCANIC LANDS.



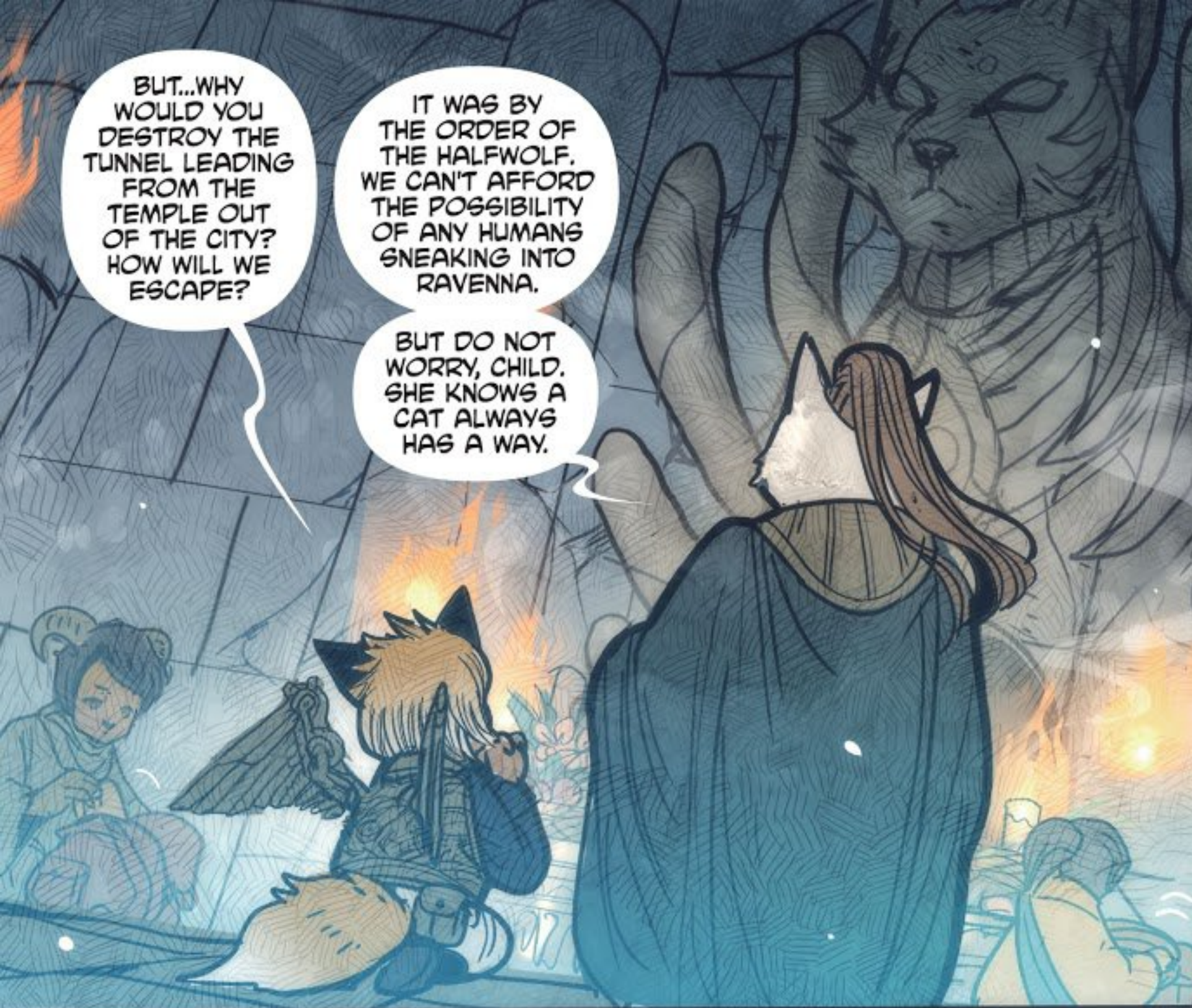
RAVENNA ISN'T
WORTH SHOWING
YOUR HAND -- IF YOU
ARRIVE WITH THE
FLEET, THE
FEDERATION WILL
KNOW YOUR FULL
STRENGTH.

BUT IF
RAVENNA IS LOST,
IT WILL BE BLAMED
ON ME. MY LEGACY
WILL BE SHROUDED
IN FAILURE AND
SHAME.

SOMEONE WOULD
LOSE AN ENTIRE CITY,
AND DEMORALIZE A
NATION, JUST TO SEE
THAT HAPPEN.



WIFE...
ARE YOU
READY TO
TELL ME
WHY?



BUT...WHY WOULD YOU DESTROY THE TUNNEL LEADING FROM THE TEMPLE OUT OF THE CITY? HOW WILL WE ESCAPE?

IT WAS BY THE ORDER OF THE HALFWOLF. WE CAN'T AFFORD THE POSSIBILITY OF ANY HUMANS SNEAKING INTO RAVENNA.

BUT DO NOT WORRY, CHILD. SHE KNOWS A CAT ALWAYS HAS A WAY.



ONLY UBASTI'S PRIESTS KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE. IT LEADS TO A HIDDEN SECTION OF RAVENNA'S WALL, NEAR THE RAVINE.



THANK YOU FOR PRAYING TO UBASTI WITH ME, KIPPA.

BUT NOW YOU SHOULD BEGIN PREPARING FOR THE WORST.

...YES...OF COURSE...



MISS TOLD ME I WAS IN CHARGE OF PROTECTING THE CHILDREN.

SHE DIDN'T SPECIFY *WHERE* THOSE CHILDREN ARE. I WOULDN'T BE BREAKING MY WORD.



HUFF! HUFF!

PSST! HEY!

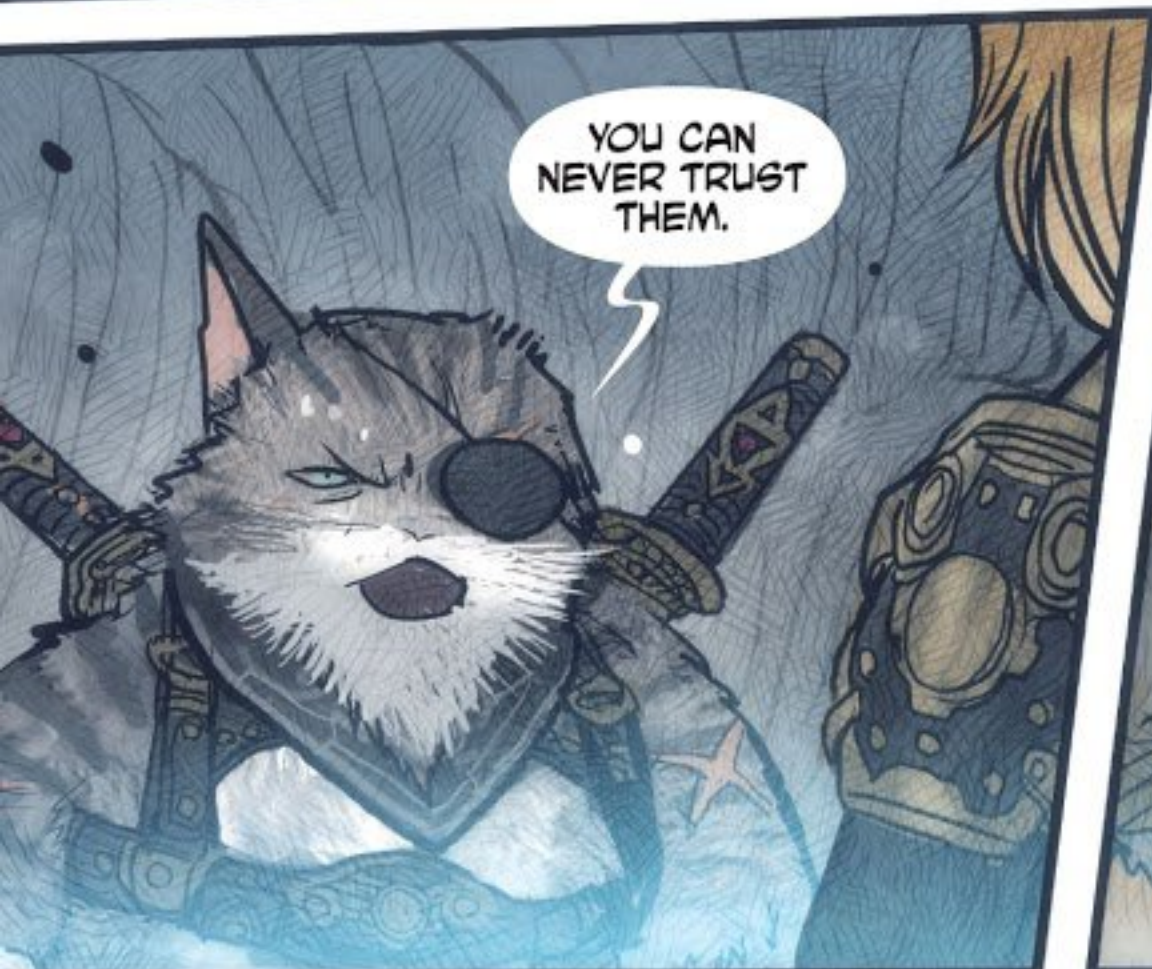
I'VE COME TO HELP!



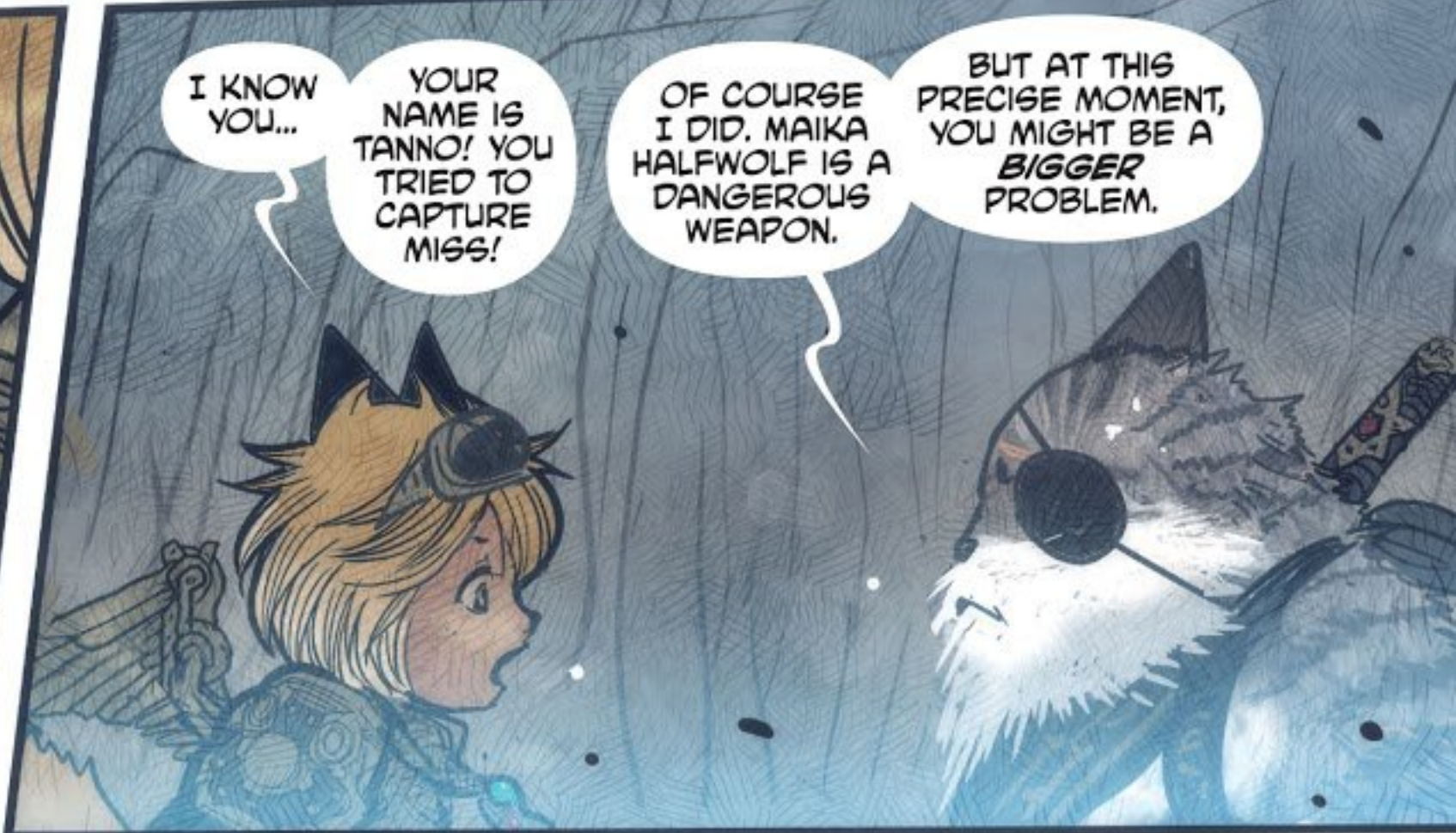
WE OWE
YOU OUR
LIVES, LITTLE
ONE.

AND WE'LL HEED
YOUR WARNING. WE
WON'T LEAVE THE
TUNNEL, NOT UNLESS
YOU GIVE THE
WORD.

DAMNED
FOXES.



YOU CAN
NEVER TRUST
THEM.



I KNOW
YOU...

YOUR
NAME IS
TANNO! YOU
TRIED TO
CAPTURE
MISS!

OF COURSE
I DID. MAIKA
HALFWOLF IS A
DANGEROUS
WEAPON.

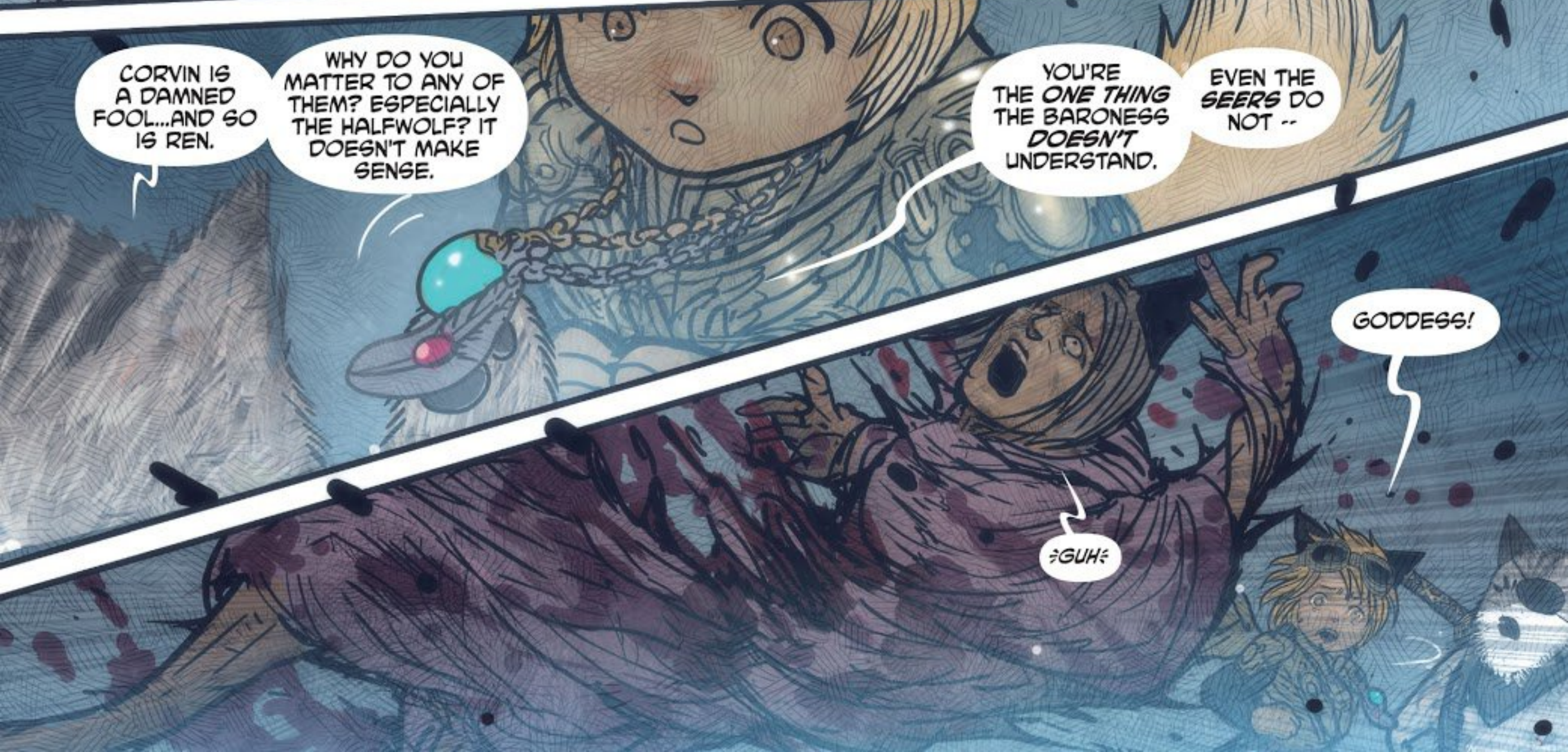
BUT AT THIS
PRECISE MOMENT,
YOU MIGHT BE A
BIGGER
PROBLEM.



YOU RISK
ALL OF
RAVENNA.

WORSE, YOU
BROKE TRUST
WITH A PRIEST OF
UBASTI, OPENING
THAT PASSAGE TO
STRANGERS.

HOW COULD
YOU BE SO
CARELESS?



CORVIN IS
A DAMNED
FOOL...AND SO
IS REN.

WHY DO YOU
MATTER TO ANY OF
THEM? ESPECIALLY
THE HALFWOLF? IT
DOESN'T MAKE
SENSE.

YOU'RE
THE **ONE THING**
THE BARONESS
DOESN'T
UNDERSTAND.

EVEN THE
SEERS DO
NOT --

GODDESS!

GUH



WHAT A
STROKE
OF HOLY
LUCK.

MARIUM
SMILES
UPON US.

MARIUM
BLESSES
WITH HER
GUIDANCE.

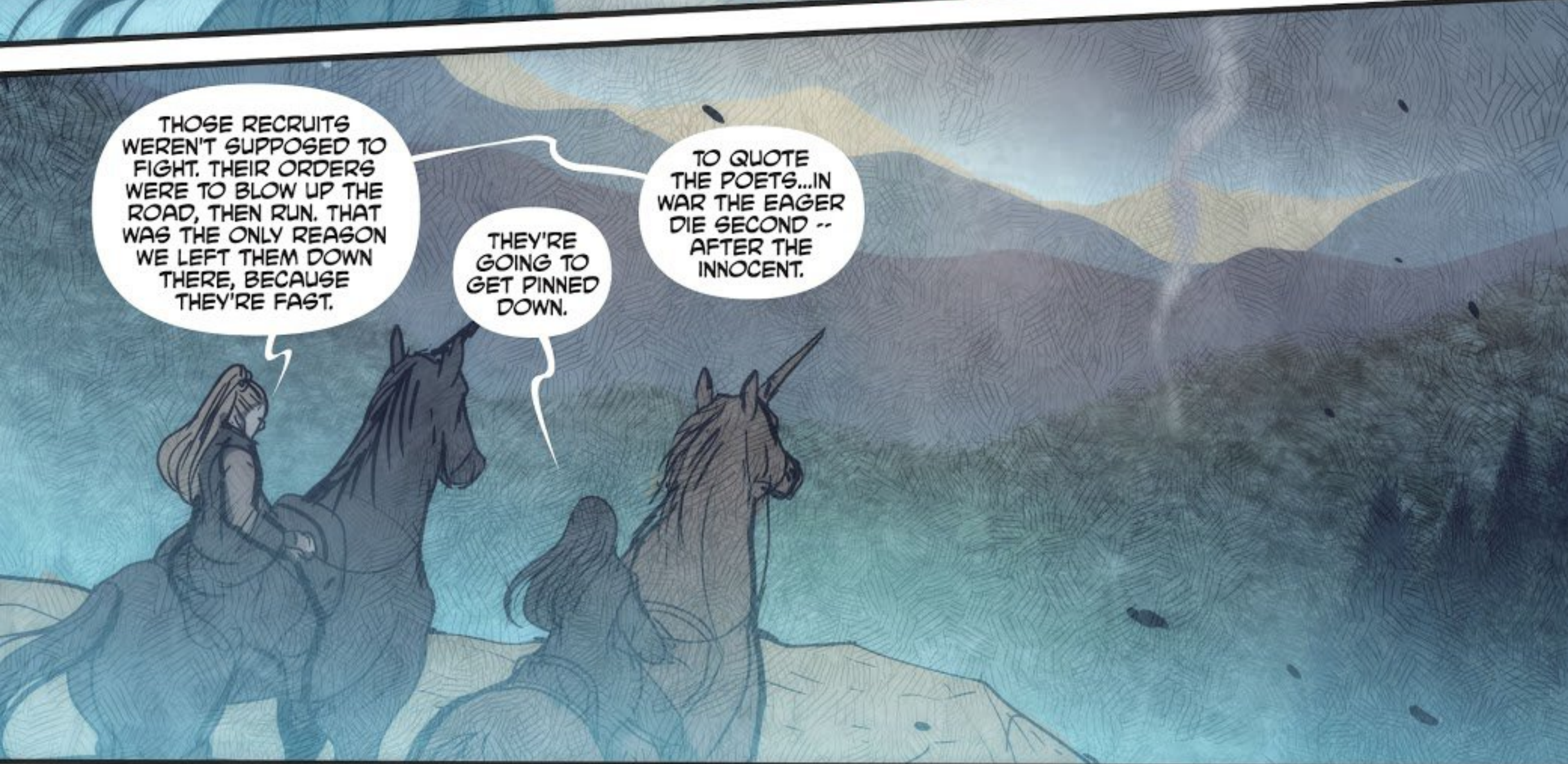
MARIUM HAS
BEEN WORKING
THROUGH YOU
TONIGHT, YOUNG
DEMON.

YOU SHOWED
US A LOVELY
WAY INTO THE
CITY.



SOMETHING IS WRONG.

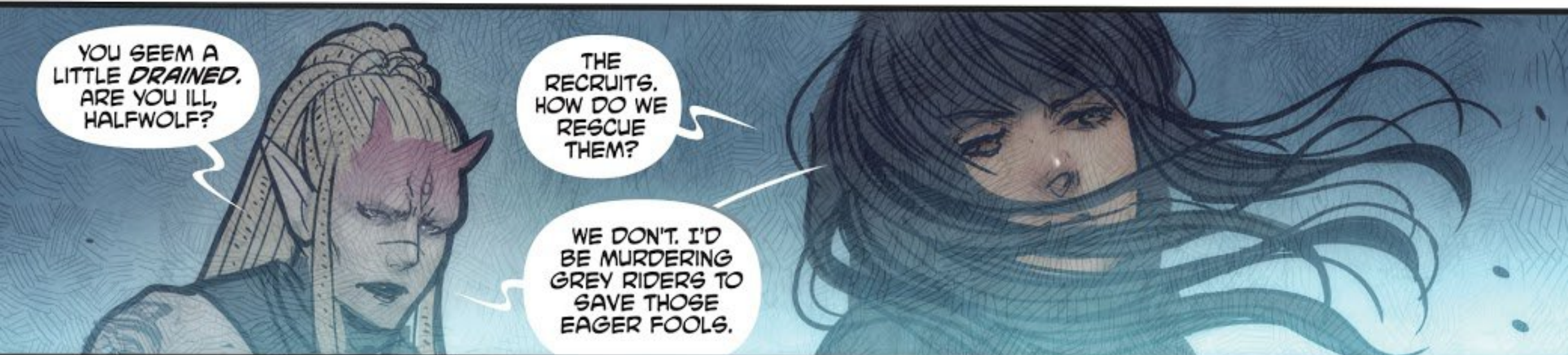
MOST CERTAINLY.



THOSE RECRUITS WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO FIGHT. THEIR ORDERS WERE TO BLOW UP THE ROAD, THEN RUN. THAT WAS THE ONLY REASON WE LEFT THEM DOWN THERE, BECAUSE THEY'RE FAST.

THEY'RE GOING TO GET PINNED DOWN.

TO QUOTE THE POETS...IN WAR THE EAGER DIE SECOND -- AFTER THE INNOCENT.



YOU SEEM A LITTLE *DRAINED*. ARE YOU ILL, HALFWOLF?

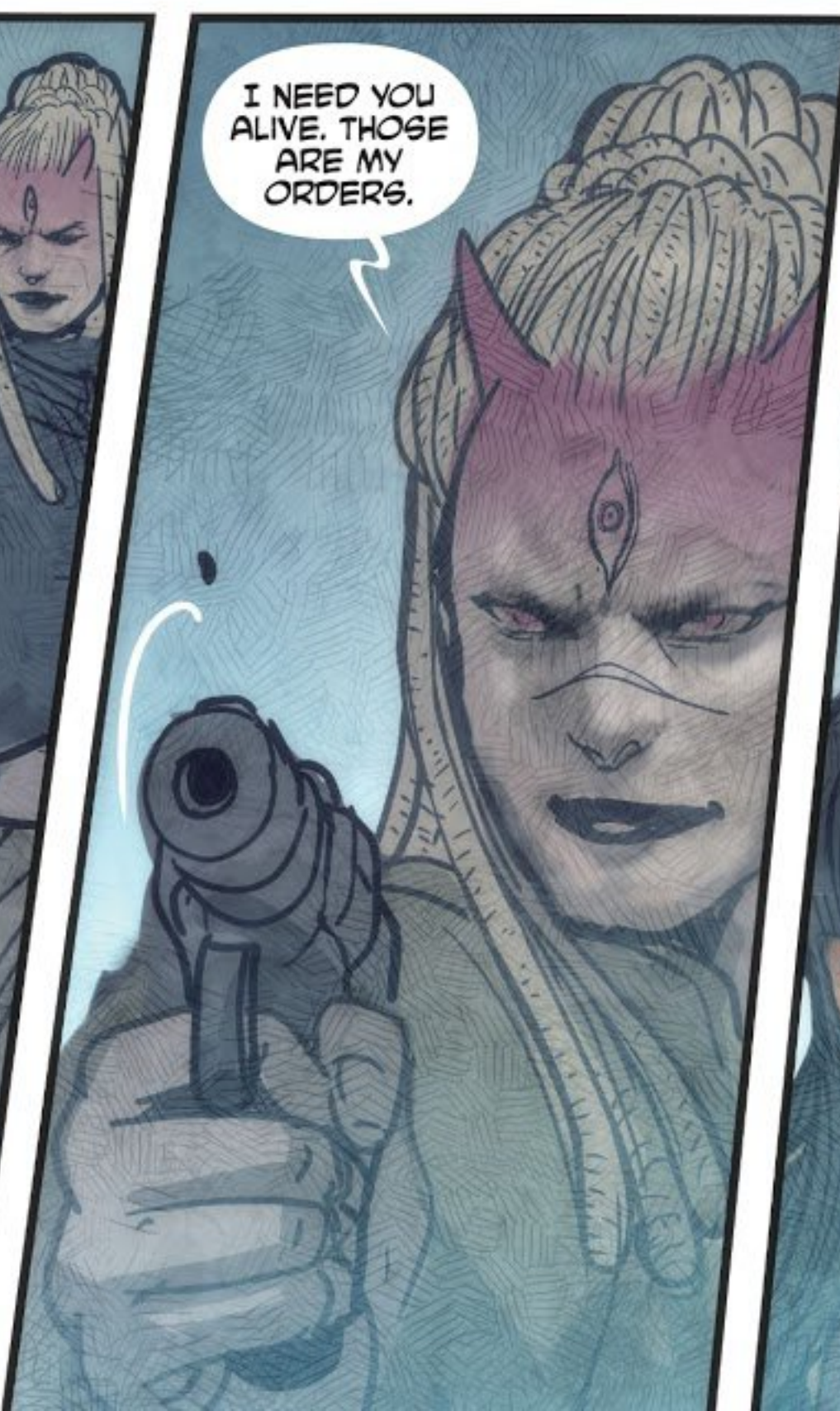
THE RECRUITS. HOW DO WE RESCUE THEM?

WE DON'T. I'D BE MURDERING GREY RIDERS TO SAVE THOSE EAGER FOOLS.



RETURN TO RAVENNA, MIN. I'LL MEET YOU THERE.

WHAT? YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY...



I NEED YOU ALIVE. THOSE ARE MY ORDERS.



TO QUOTE THE POETS... IN WAR, NOTHING DISAPPOINTS QUITE LIKE OBEDIENCE.



KILL 'EM!

AAIEEE!

I'M NOT LEAVING YOU!

KILL 'EM ALL!

CHOM!

...GO...

YOUR HORNS ARE GONNA LOOK GOOD ON MY WALL.



YOUR FACE WILL LOOK GOOD IN MY TEETH.



RUN.



ZZZT...SCREAMS FROM THE FOREST... REINFORCEMENTS HAVEN'T RETURNED...ZZZT... WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS... ZZZT...



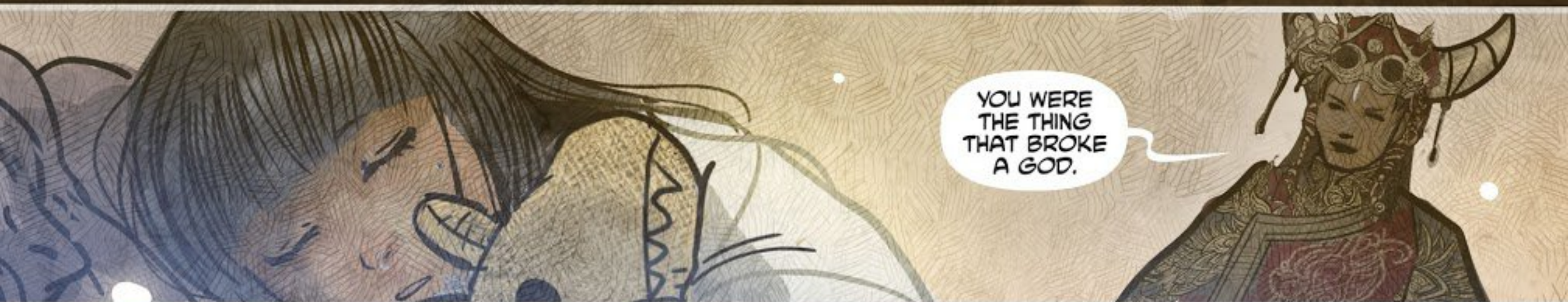
TELL THEM NOT TO WASTE MORE LIVES ON WHATEVER'S IN THERE. IF IT'S NOT ADVANCING ON US, THEN IT'S A DISTRACTION.

REGROUP, AND MARCH AROUND.



YOU LOOK
SO INNOCENT,
LITTLE
PRINCESS.

BUT IT WAS
BECAUSE OF
YOU THE EMPIRE
FELL.



YOU WERE
THE THING
THAT BROKE
A GOD.



...INNOCENCE...
BREAKS
NOTHING...

...EXCEPT
ITSELF...



AH...
AND DO
YOU FINALLY
REMEMBER
MORE THAN
THE LIES,
ZINN?

IS THE
TRUTH
COMING
BACK TO
YOU?

...I
REMEMBER...
ENOUGH...



...I
REMEMBER...

...MY
BELOVED...

...I
REMEMBER...

...WHAT
OUR
LOVE...

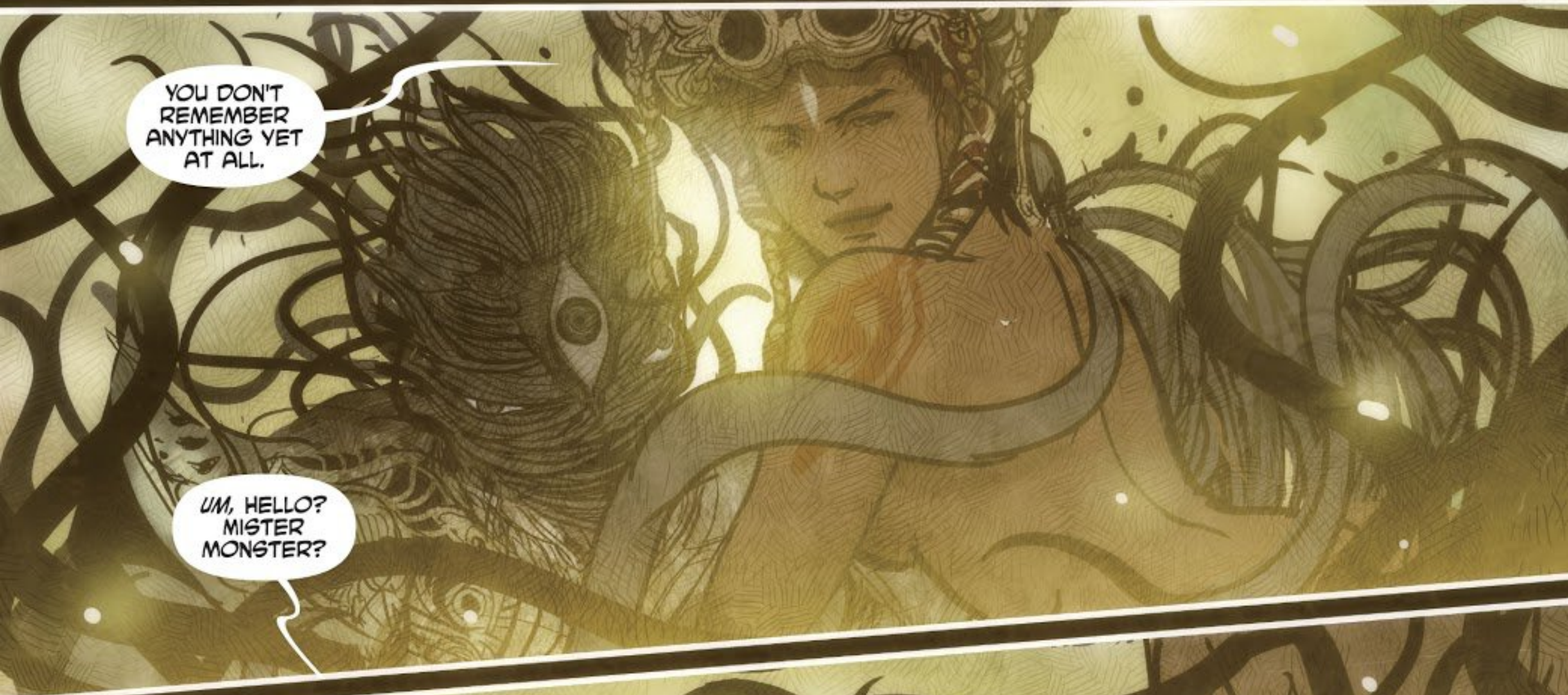
...CREATED...



OH,
ZINN...



LOOK
AGAIN.



YOU DON'T
REMEMBER
ANYTHING YET
AT ALL.

UM, HELLO?
MISTER
MONSTER?



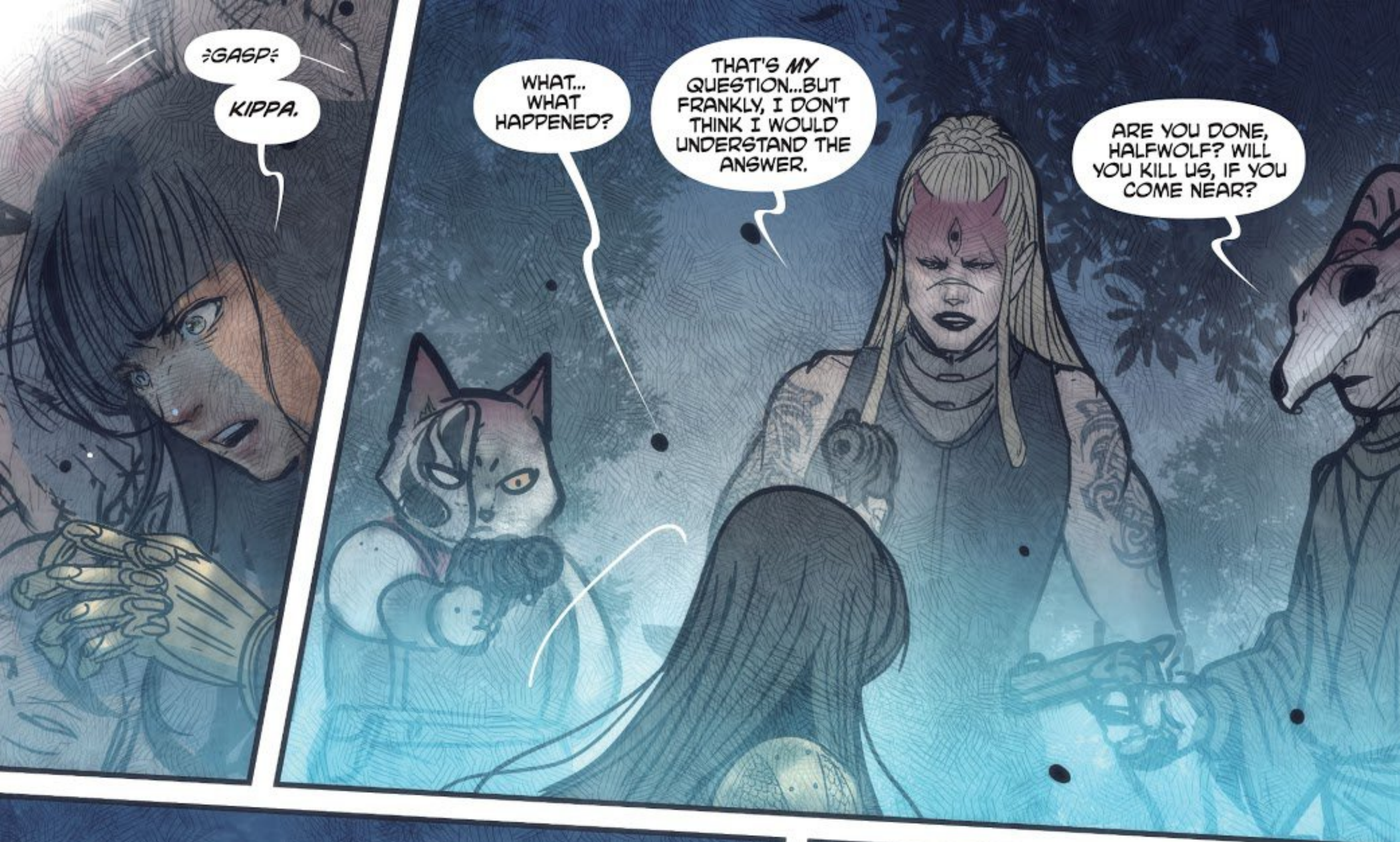
I DON'T
MEAN TO
INTERRUPT,
BUT...

...HELP?



WHAT
THE
FUCK IS
THIS?

...HELP...

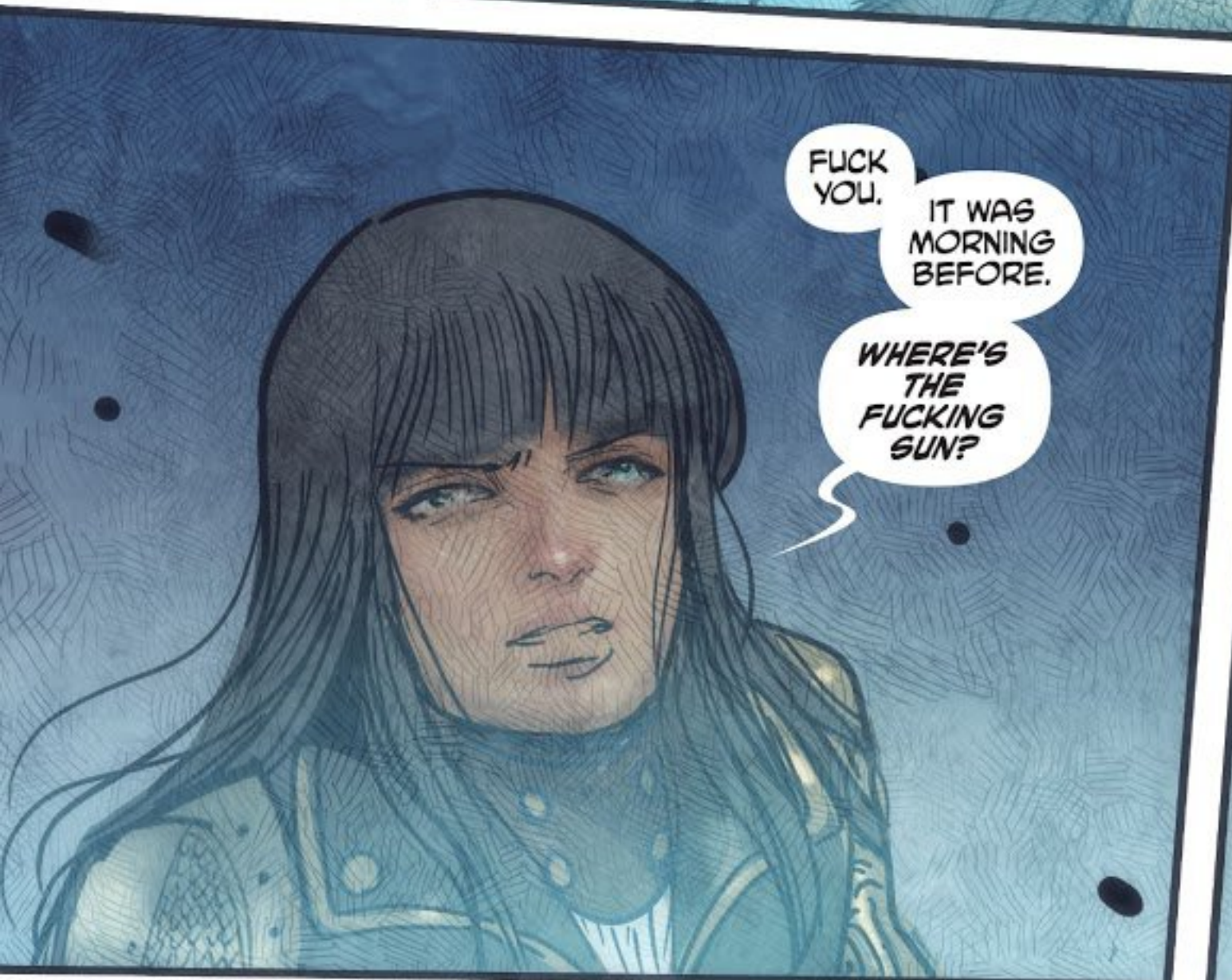


≡GASP≡
KIPPA.

WHAT...
WHAT
HAPPENED?

THAT'S *MY*
QUESTION...BUT
FRANKLY, I DON'T
THINK I WOULD
UNDERSTAND THE
ANSWER.

ARE YOU DONE,
HALFWOLF? WILL
YOU KILL US, IF YOU
COME NEAR?



FUCK
YOU.

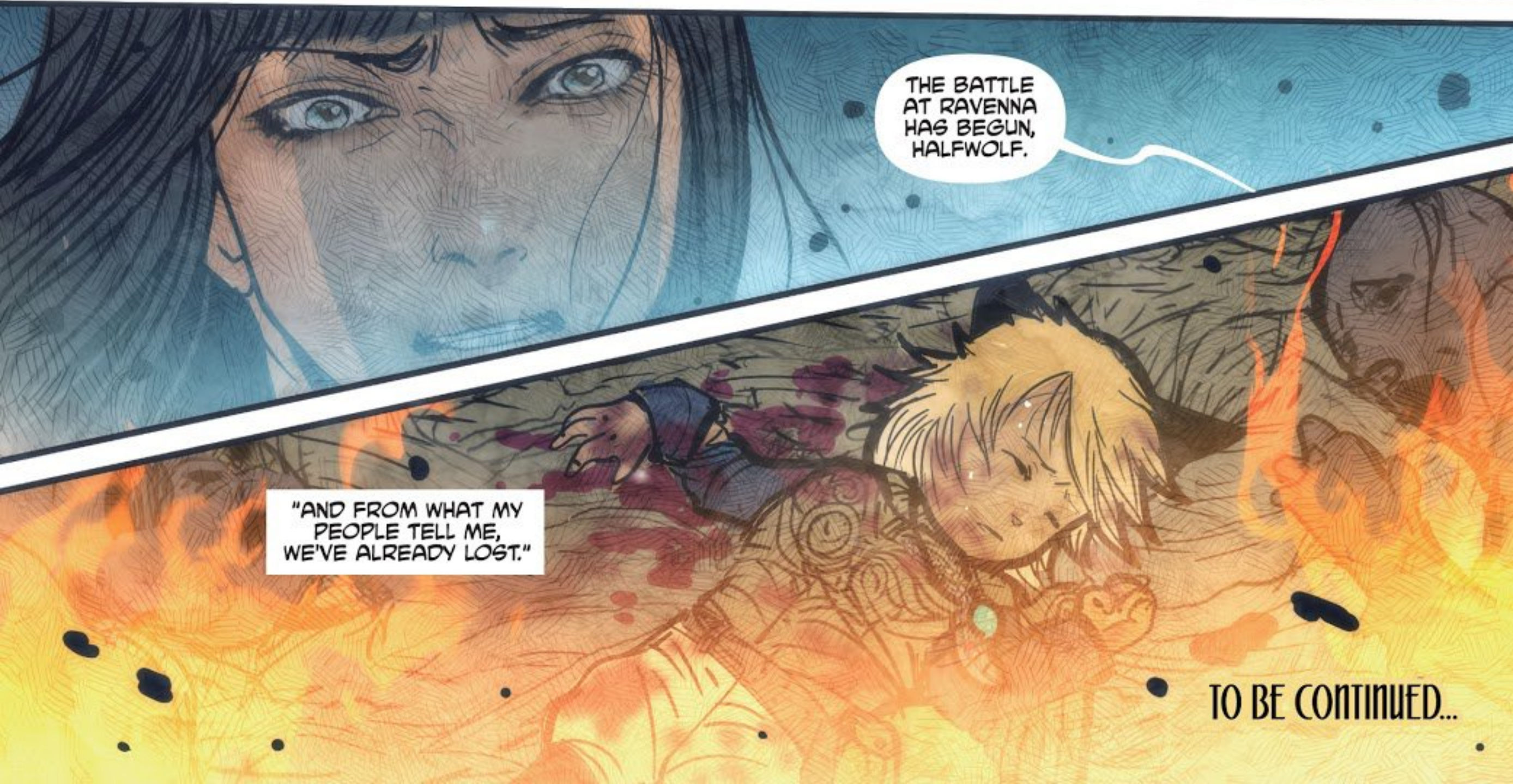
IT WAS
MORNING
BEFORE.

WHERE'S
THE
FUCKING
SUN?



YOU'VE
BEEN ASLEEP
FOR MOST
OF THE DAY,
IN THAT NEST
OF HALF-
EATEN
HUMAN
BODIES.

WE
COULDN'T
WAKE YOU.
SUCH A
TERRIBLE
SHAME.



THE BATTLE
AT RAVENNA
HAS BEGUN,
HALFWOLF.

"AND FROM WHAT MY
PEOPLE TELL ME,
WE'VE ALREADY LOST."

TO BE CONTINUED...

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MONSTRESS TATTOO!



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Tattoo Artist: Jack Phomphithak

Send letters & fan art to:
monstress.comic@gmail.com!
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